

Title of Article: Evaluating the 2007 General Elections in Nigeria: Options for Electronic Voting

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Abstract: One controversial problem confronting the Nigerian nation is developing an acceptable voting system that can reduce the manipulation and falsification of election results. The nation has had a history of electoral malpractices rigging. The consequences of this had been social upheavals with negative impact on the polity. For instance in the First Republic, the falsification of 1965 western region election enraged the people, precipitating spontaneous rioting that contributed in part to the fall of that republic. The same scenario was repeated in the second republic when the then ruling party the National Party of Nigeria (NPN) claimed a 'moon slide' victory that stunned the electorate who went out on rampage in some states in protest against the outcome as announced by the Federal Electoral Commission (FEDECO). The discontentment in the country stemming from the outcome of that election gave the soldiers the legitimacy to takeover the reins of government on the eve of 1984. This experience informed the idea to adopt a leak prove system for the third republic that can reduce the incidence of election rigging associated with the secrete ballot system that was in use in the previous republics. What arose out of that experiment was the open ballot system and its modified version used in the June 12, 1993 presidential election that most analyst reckons as credible in reflecting the wishes of the population. However, the secrete ballot system re-emerged in the fourth republic and eight years after, we have seen the manipulative ingenuity of the Nigerian politician to rig elections in his desperation for power. These fraudulent practices that thwarts the will of the people have been well

documented in commentaries and reports of election monitoring groups and given the crisis of the 2007 general elections in Nigeria and the verdicts on that election have necessitated the need to devise a new system that can ensure that the vote of Nigerian count during elections. One option that has come up is the electronic voting system which was suggested in 2003, but accepted in 2007 but not implemented.

The paper examined the various voting systems that have been used in Nigeria making an argument that the secrete ballot system is imbued with imperfections that makes it unsuitable for the Nigerian political environment. It highlight reasons why the open ballot system is not the alternative, while making a strong argument that faithful application of the system of electronic voting in Nigeria can be possible and has the potentials to make the vote count and restore the confidence of Nigerians to the electoral system.