

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

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Abstract: Developing an acceptable voting system capable of reducing incidences of manipulation and falsification of election results is one huge issue in the current debate for electoral reforms in Nigeria. The nation has had a history of electoral malpractices and rigging, the consequences of which had been social upheavals with negative impact on the polity. For instance in the First Republic, the falsification of 1965 Western region election results 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 section of the electorate who went 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. These experiences informed the various experiments in the third republic aimed at adopting a leak proof system that can reduce the incidence of election rigging associated with the paper 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 which most analysts saw as credible for reflecting the wishes of the electorate. However, the paper ballot system re-emerged in the fourth republic and eight years after, the debate on suitable voting system in Nigeria is yet to abate. The urgency for a reform of the electoral system is

sequel to outcome of elections in the fourth republic especially the 2007 general election which was not only widely described as fraudulent by both local and foreign observers but which, the election tribunals by their verdicts have validated. The paper examines the various voting systems that have been used in Nigeria and makes an argument that the paper ballot system is imbued with imperfections that make it unsuitable for the Nigerian political environment. It highlight reasons why the open ballot system is not the alternative, and makes 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.