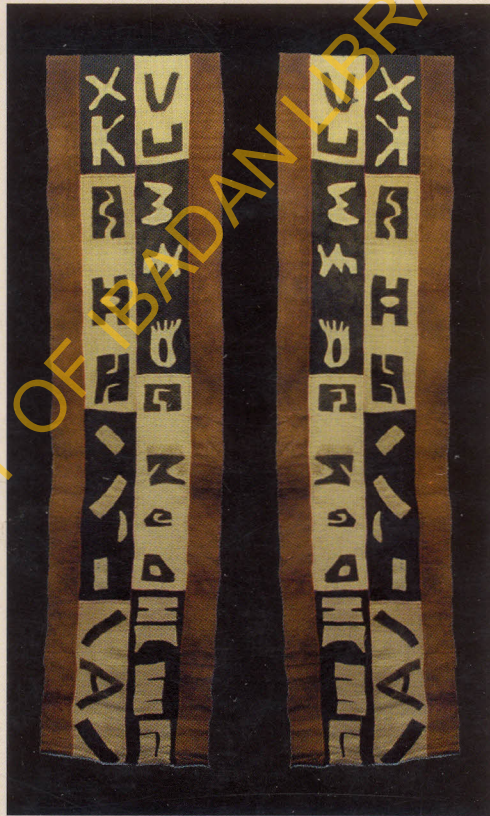


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Special Issue
Nigeria's 2011 Elections



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Special Issue
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THE COST OF THE 2011 GENERAL ELECTIONS IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the cost of the 2011 general elections in Nigeria in real and financial terms. It reviews the regulatory framework for financing the elections and attempts to estimate the costs, drawing on figures and reports published by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) and reports relating to the financial activities of political parties, candidates and other politicians. It estimates the cost to have been about N566.2-billion,¹ representing about 2% of the gross domestic product. This figure does not include party and campaign financing. The article explores other, non-monetary, costs, including the loss of life and property in the violence that followed the elections, and concludes that the cost of the elections was too high for the sustenance of democracy. Hopeful that future elections will cost less, it offers suggestions about ways of reducing costs without impinging on the integrity of elections.

INTRODUCTION

Academic preoccupation with the cost of elections has focused largely on political finance. This focus has been driven by the scandals relating to the sources of campaign funds as well as to the sordid use of money to affect electoral outcomes.

According to Pinto-Duschinsky (2004), political finance includes party and campaign funding, the cost of political lobbying, expenses associated with newspapers and media and the cost of litigation. These studies deal with such issues as corruption and regulation and subsidies. While there is a multiplicity of rules and regulations, enforcement has, in most cases, been problematic.

There have been few studies of the political financing of developing democracies and in many cases in these developing countries it is difficult to

1 This is approximately US\$363-million at N156 to the US dollar.

access data showing the cost of election campaigns and other related activities. In Nigeria this is an acute problem (Adetula 2008, p xxxiii). In recent times, especially with the onset of the global economic recession, the engagement with political finance has been extended to include the general cost of administering elections. This is underscored by the need to support poor countries in promoting effective electoral governance in order to achieve free and fair elections.

Among the studies are those of the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) and the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA), which have focused on the cost of administering election processes such as voter registration, boundary delimitation and the public financing of political parties and campaigns. They also focus on the sources of revenue for funding the administration of election processes. Such sources included contributions from international and bilateral donors to election costs and to civil society, for the training or education of electoral management bodies (EMBs) and the costs of management.

This article examines the cost of the 2011 general elections in real and financial terms. Given the relative ineffectiveness of financial disclosure laws in Nigeria and the remarkable paucity of data on election management and campaign finance, it is an exploratory study. It reviews the regulatory framework for financing the elections and attempts to estimate the financial cost, drawing on figures and reports published by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) and reports relating to the financial activities of political parties, candidates and other politicians.

THE REGULATORY FRAMEWORK FOR ELECTORAL FINANCE

The Constitution and the Electoral Act 2010 (as amended) provide the regulatory framework for the use of money by parties and candidates canvassing for votes in any election. Section 221 of the Constitution provides as follows:

No association, other than a political party, shall canvass for votes for any candidate at any election or contribute to the funds of any political party or to the election expenses of any candidate at an election.

Sections 225, 226 and 227 deal with party financing and accountability. They require parties to submit to INEC detailed annual statements and analyses of sources of funds and other assets and statements of expenditure. INEC, in turn, is expected to submit a report to the National Assembly on the accounts and balance sheets of every political party. Section 89(2) of the Electoral Act 2010 (as

amended) specifies the period to be covered as 1 January to 31 December each year.

Section 89 (3) and (4) of the Act also empowers INEC to authorise any of its officers to gain access to the records and audited accounts kept by a party and to publish such examination or audit in three national newspapers.

Section 229 of the Constitution interprets 'association' to mean any body of persons 'who agree to act together for any common purpose'. This includes associations formed for any ethnic, social, cultural, occupational or religious purpose. Section 228 enables the National Assembly to make laws providing for punishment of any person involved in the management or control of any political party who is found to have contravened sections 221, 225(3) and 227 of the Constitution.

The Electoral Act extends the provisions of the Constitution and of the Electoral Act 2006. Like previous electoral laws it provides for penalties for offences relating to the financing of political parties. Related to these provisions is the Companies and Allied Matters Act 1990 (the CAMA), s 38(2) of which precludes companies from making a donation or gift of any of their property or funds to a political party or association for political purposes. Officers of a company who contravene this provision or any person in the company who votes to contravene the provision must refund the amount or the gift to the company and is liable for a fine.

Unlike previous laws, the Electoral Act 2010 did not provide for grants to be made to political parties. Section 90 of the Electoral Act 2006 empowered the National Assembly to approve a grant to political parties contesting elections. Subsection 2(a) stated that 10% of the grant (30% in Electoral Act 2002) was to be shared equally among all registered parties and subsection 2(b) stated that the remaining 90% was to be shared among the registered parties in proportion to the number of seats won by each party in the national Parliament.

The 2010 Act, like its predecessors, makes detailed provision for campaign contributions. Sections 91, 92, and 93 deal with contributions and election expenses. Each party must keep a record of all contributions and the amount contributed (s 93(2)). Section 91 puts a ceiling on the expenditure to be incurred by candidates according to the offices they are vying for. The provisions of s 91 of the 2010 Act represent an increase in the ceiling of 100% over that provided for s 93 of the 2006 Act (see Table 1).

The increase in the maximum amount for campaign expenses shows that the legislators acknowledge that the provisions of the 2006 Act were unrealistic or that there has been a significant increase in the costs of political finance as a result of inflation. Given that inflation rates in Nigeria have never exceeded 15%, it is more likely to be the former.

Table 1
Ceiling on Campaign Expenditure

Candidates	Maximum expenses 2006 Act N	Maximum expenses 2010 Act N
Presidential candidates	500 000 000	1000 000 000
Gubernatorial candidates	100 000 000	200 000 000
Senatorial candidates	20 000 000	40 000 000
Candidates for the House of Representatives	10 000 000	20 000 000
Candidates for state houses of assembly	5 000 000	10 000 000
Candidates for chairman of local government	5 000 000	10 000 000
Councillorship candidates	500 000	1 000 000

Source: Compiled by the authors

As far back as 1999 TY Danjuma, minister of defence in the Obasanjo government, said he had given Obasanjo's election campaign \$7-million (N1 120 000 000), emphasising that 'not once did he [Obasanjo] find out from me where this money came from. Was it from me, from my business associates, whether I stole it or whatever. He didn't ask me' (Adetula 2008, pp xxxviii-xxix).

During the gubernatorial campaign in Anambra State, the People's Democratic Party (PDP) raised N2-billion at a single fund-raising dinner for its candidate, Chukwuma Soludo. At that event governors of the 28 PDP states donated N1.5-billion; Chief Arthur Eze donated N250-million; Chief Emeka Offor and Chief Ifeanyi Okoye contributed N100-million and N10-million, respectively. Goodluck Jonathan, who was then vice-president, was chairman of the campaign committee (Ikuomola 2010).

The amount raised was far above the ceiling of N200 000 000 for gubernatorial candidates stipulated by the Electoral Act 2006 which was then in operation. By contrast, Goodluck Jonathan displayed an unusual regard for the electoral law when, during his campaign fund-raising dinner on 29 October 2010 in Abuja, he reminded those in attendance to comply with the fund-raising provision of the Electoral Act, stating that no individual donor should contribute more than N1-million to his presidential campaign. In the end, the exact amount raised at that event was never made public (Ajafu 2010).

Like the 2006 Act the 2010 Act contained elaborate provisions to ensure transparency and full disclosure of campaign and candidate financing. Section 92(3) demands that the election expenses of a political party be submitted to INEC in separate audited returns within six months after an election. Such returns must be signed by the chairman of the party and supported by an affidavit from the signatories swearing to the correctness of its contents.

Section 93(2) requires a political party to keep an account and asset book documenting:

- (a) All monetary and other forms of contribution received by the party;
and
- (b) The name and address of any person or entity that contributes any money or assets which exceed N1 000 000.

Subsection 3 states further that no political party may accept any monetary or other contribution exceeding N100 000 unless it discloses its source to INEC. Subsection 4 requires political parties sponsoring a candidate to file a report with INEC within three months after the announcement of the election results detailing the contributions made by individuals and entities.

There are penalties for failure to make these disclosures or to submit the appropriate reports. Any contravention is subject to a minimum fine of N500 000. Section 91(12) states specifically that any accountant who 'falsifies or conspires or aids a candidate to forge or falsify a document relating to his expenditure at an election or receipt or donation for the election commits an offence that is liable to 10 years imprisonment'.

Section 15(d) of the Third Schedule of the 1999 Constitution (as amended) stipulates that INEC must 'arrange for the annual examination and auditing of the funds and accounts of political parties, and publish a report on such examination and audit for public information'.

On 1 April 2012 INEC published the executive summary of the External Auditors' Report on the accounts of the 63 registered political parties, showing an increasing lack of financial discipline and growing recklessness in the administration of the parties. The report specifically shows that the PDP, the Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN) and the Congress for Progressive Change (CPC) failed to keep the required records.

The report noted further that 56 political parties spent in excess of N2.5-billion to pursue their political objectives in 2010. The PDP and six other parties were yet to submit their financial records for auditing in line with the Electoral Act. The CPC, the ACN and the All Nigeria Peoples Party (ANPP), did not have 'prepared and audited internal financial statements for the year 2010', while the

All Progressives Grand Alliance (APGA) failed or refused to keep the conventional books of accounts. The commission also faulted the parties' inability to keep up-to-date membership registers and their failure to manage their assets effectively for the purpose of easy auditing.

The ACN claimed that its income for the year was N84.9-million, while its entire expenditure was put at N11.2-million. INEC's specific comment on the ACN was that its 'conventional accounting books weren't properly maintained. Budget and budgetary control weren't in place and the party doesn't have a well-defined fixed assets register and the assets were not labelled.' The ACN had 'no solid financial plan on ground'. INEC therefore advised the ACN to 'introduce an asset register for its fixed assets all over the country and monitor the deployment of these assets'.

With regard to the CPC, the report stated that its 'budget and budgetary control weren't in place. The CPC put its income for the year at N331.2-million, while its expenditure is N268.6-million. The party does not maintain both its membership and fixed assets register.' The commission also recommended that the CPC 'should maintain a comprehensive membership register and install more effective internal control measures and comply with the political parties finance manual and handbook'. With regard to the ANPP the report notes that the party's conventional books of accounts were properly kept and maintained. However, it described the internal control procedures of the party as weak. The ANPP claimed to have generated N493.7-million and spent N370.5-million.

Parties that did not submit their financial records for scrutiny include the Peoples Mandate Party (PMP), the Peoples Party of Nigeria (PPN) the Accord Party (AP), the Action Alliance (AA), the Peoples Salvation Party (PSP), Democratic Front for Peoples Federation (DFPF) and Freedom Party of Nigeria (FPN) (INEC 2012).

The PDP's national publicity secretary, Chief Olisa Metuh, challenged INEC's report, maintaining that his party had always made it a point of duty to submit its audited reports when they were due and in strict accordance with the regulations of the electoral commission. The CPC's spokesman, Rotimi Fashekun, asked whether INEC had explained how it had come to spend N89-billion on a biometric database, saying the 'entire record was useless to be tendered in a court of law'.

For its part, INEC was unable to prosecute any of the parties. The chief press secretary to the chairman of the commission, Kayode Idowu, stated that INEC was not constitutionally empowered to sanction erring political parties (Itua 2012, Oladipo, Itua & Muazu 2012).

ESTIMATING THE COST OF THE 2011 ELECTIONS

One of the tenets of economic analysis is that every activity, action and inaction has a cost. Cost describes the sacrifice of resources (funds, time, etc) that must be given up in order to execute a particular activity and/or achieve a specific goal/objective. Costs are classified in production activity as fixed or variable, explicit or implicit, and, in general, as direct or indirect.

Direct costs are those closely associated with an activity or expressly incurred while carry on an activity. Indirect costs, or opportunity costs, are those that are incidental to an activity, or, put more succinctly, represent the costs of alternative uses of resources vis-à-vis the activity.

The whole essence of an activity, action or inaction is to achieve specific goals/objectives. However, the principle of efficiency – a basic principle of economic management – stipulates that the costs of executing an activity or action should be less than the value of the achieved goals/objectives. If they are not, the use of resources on an activity is described as inefficient and wasteful.

The election process is fundamental to a democratic system of government. According to Mudambi & Navarra (2000), the principle of democracy is implemented through elections and is dependent on the act of voting. Thus, without the electoral process, the democratic framework ceases to exist.

According to the current standard theory and practice of elections, the main expenses, or direct costs of an election are incurred for the following activities: voter registration, boundary delimitation, the voting operation, counting and transmission of results, dispute adjudication, voter education and information, campaigning by political parties and candidates and vigilance or oversight by party representatives and domestic or international observers (Goodwin-Gill 1994, 2006; López-Pintor 2000; López-Pintor & Fischer 2005; OSCE 2001; EU 2002; IDEA 2002). Consequently, electoral costs include all the costs incurred in undertaking such activities, regardless of the kind of agency involved, whether national or local, public or private.

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)-IFES-sponsored Cost of Registration and Elections (CORE) Project divides electoral costs into three categories:

- core (or direct) costs – those costs that are routinely associated with implementing an electoral process in a stable electoral environment;
- diffuse (or indirect) costs – those costs for election-related services that cannot be disentangled from the general budgets of agencies that assist with the implementation of an electoral process;

- integrity costs – those costs, over and above the core costs, that are necessary to provide safety, integrity, political neutrality, and a level playing field for an electoral process.

In addition, there are indirect or opportunity costs associated with elections. These are the number of worker-hours lost when work-free holidays are declared because an election is taking place. There are also non-monetary costs in intensely competitive elections or elections in volatile situations such as post-election conflict, which may include pockets of violence that involve the destruction of property and loss of human life. The magnitude of election costs (both direct and indirect, core or diffuse, etc) is influenced by a number of factors. These include the size and nature of a democracy; whether elections for different positions are held simultaneously or on different dates; and the extent and sophistication of technology deployed.

Popular opinion is that the bigger a democracy the higher the cost of elections. The CORE Project highlighted the importance of the type of democratic environment, stable, transitional and post-conflict democracies, to determining both the kind and amount of electoral costs. It was shown (see Table 2) that election costs are generally lower in stable democracies than in transitional and post-conflict democracies.

Election costs are also significantly lower when elections are consolidated rather than held on separate dates. The number and time sequence of elections are variables which make comparisons of costs difficult between different countries, since it is not always easy to split the budget and assign figures to different elections.

The extent and sophistication of technology deployed in elections has been shown to contribute to high costs, particularly, when technological innovations are adopted from another country.

A distinction is also made between *personnel* and *operational costs*. Over time, there are *fixed costs*, covering the ordinary functioning of an electoral administration, which will be incurred independently of the occurrence of elections in a given year. On the other hand, *variable costs* are those related to the actual conduct of the election. Almost the entire budget for a specific election consists of variable costs.

There are three types of funding sources:

- Separate election budgets which form part of the consolidated budget of the nation.
- Election-tied funds which form part of the budget of different public agencies, where their main responsibility / activity is something other than elections (eg, civil registries, police, post office).

Table 2
Election Costs in Stable, Transitional and Post-Conflict Democracies

	Stable		Transitional		Post-conflict	
	Core costs*	Integrity costs	Core costs*	Integrity costs	Core costs*	Integrity costs
Voter registration	High	Not relevant	High	Relevant	High	Relevant
Boundary delimitation	Relevant	Not relevant	Relevant	Not relevant	Relevant	Relevant
Voting operation materials, logistics, training	Very high	High	Very high	Very high	Very high	Very high
Counting and transmission of results	High	Not relevant	Relevant	High	Very high	Very high
Dispute adjudication	Relevant	Not relevant	High	Not relevant	High	High
Voter education & information	High	Not relevant	Very high	High	High	Very high
Campaigning by political parties	Very high	Not relevant	High	Very high	Very high	Very high
Vigilance: party agents, domestic monitors, international observers	High	Not relevant	Very high	Very high	Very high	Very high

* Cost categories include direct and diffuse costs.

Source: UNDP

- The international dimension. This is often significant in the case of post-conflict elections and even second-generation elections in emerging democracies where donors play an active role in training, monitoring and funding elections.

Costs covered in an electoral budget can readily be identified in the budget document but other costs may be so diffuse that even if they are properly identified they may prove difficult or impossible to assess accurately. There are also degrees of diffuseness. There are costs for activities, which can be clearly identified but still cannot be disentangled from the general budget. An example would be the contribution of civil registries which provide the EMB with information for the production of voter lists or the production of voter lists within the national agency in charge of censuses and statistics.

In addition, there are hidden costs within the ordinary operations of agencies such as the police force, the school system, local governments and government-owned media, which support the electoral process in various ways. While these are real costs, they are not included in the electoral budget and, in many cases, are not easy to assess (Lopez-Pinto & Fischer 2005).

The precise costs of the 2011 elections are difficult to assess because no figures have been officially released. Nevertheless, the costs have been estimated to be about N566.2-billion, representing about 2% of the country's gross domestic product. This figure includes both direct and indirect expenses. The direct costs include voter registration (including the purchase of 132 000 direct data capture – DDC – machines), voting operations (materials, logistics and training), the counting and transmission of results and voter education and information, which amounted to about N195.3-billion (provided by a combination of budgetary and extra-budgetary provisions between 2010 and 2011).

These figures exclude the costs of campaigns and the activities of the various political parties. In INEC's 2010 budget the sum of N50-billion was appropriated for the specific purpose of preparing for the 2011 elections. INEC's chairman initially presented a budget of N74 for the voter registration exercise and the purchase of 132 000 DDC machines. He later revised the figure and presented a budget of N87.7-billion to the National Assembly, which was approved. He later requested an additional N12-billion and, in the 2011 federal government budget, N45.39-billion was provided for INEC (Anaro 2011).

In a statement made during a visit to Ghana, INEC chair, Attahiru Mohammed Jega, said that for the registration process alone 400 000 ad hoc or temporary staff had been deployed in addition to the 12 000 permanent INEC staff, and that about N75-billion had been needed to procure the equipment, train the ad hoc staff, place announcements, move equipment and so on (Smith-Asante 2012).

The cost of elections in Nigeria has generally been very high and the cost of those in 2011 were higher than ever in both absolute and relative terms. For instance, INEC received N87.7-billion (\$576.9-million) for the registration of about 70-million voters over a period of three weeks using biometric devices, while Bangladesh, a developing country like Nigeria and one of the most populous countries in the world, spent about \$65-million, approximately N9.7-billion on a biometric voter registration exercise conducted over a period of 11 months in 2008.

Interestingly, Transparency International rates Bangladesh as more corrupt than Nigeria. However, while Bangladesh's voter registration exercise recorded 80-million eligible voters, Nigeria's, which cost about 600% more, recorded fewer than 70-million.

Even the Afghanistan voter registration exercise, which, in 2009, was labelled the single most expensive component of the electoral process because it cost a whopping \$74-million, approximately N11.248-billion, turned out to be cheaper or more cost effective than that of Nigeria.

Similarly, it cost Canada approximately Canadian \$19.2-million (about N2.8-billion) to register a total of 23-million voters in 2010. Multiplying Canada's cost and the number of registered voters by three will give a figure of about 69-million voters registered at a cost of N8.6-billion – registering the same number in Nigeria cost N87.7-billion (Soyinka 2011).

While there are no systematic data on campaign and party finances, given the poor record keeping of the parties and the inability of INEC get them to obey the law, we can get a sense of the cost of such activities by looking media report.

In the case of the election campaign of Goodluck Jonathan, Abbah, Abdulhamid, Jaafar, Agbese & Sunday (2011) noted that the average cost of hiring the helicopter he used was \$10 000 (about N1.5-million) an hour. The president's campaign team rented the helicopter for trips costing an average of N20-million for each day Jonathan used it for his campaign.

Different groups placed massive advertisements on television, radio and in newspapers. For instance, advertisements monitored on Wednesday, 16 March, the day the president visited both Jigawa and Kano states, the Nigerian Television Authority (NTA) gave the event in Jigawa more than three hours of live coverage and that in Kano three hours. A three-hour live broadcast on NTA costs N10-million. A single full-page colour insert in a national daily costs between N450 000 and N500 000, while the wrap-around colour advertisements used by the president cost between N1-million and N45-million, depending on the medium, relationship with the medium operators and price negotiations. For instance, *The Guardian* newspaper put the cost of a wrap-around advert at N25-million.

There were intermittent advertisements on Ray Power Radio and Africa

Independent Television (AIT) from early morning to late evening on that day and 14 full-page colour advertisements in newspapers, of these some covering four or more pages. A rough calculation of the cost of these is about N55-million. And these costs only constitute about 5% of the expenses for that one day of campaigning in view of the fact that all the party's officials and top campaign chieftains were paid allowances for accompanying the president on the trip. The figure increases when the cost of food, accommodation and an 'honorarium', given to party chieftains, traditional rulers and other very important persons who could influence the decision of the electorate, are included.

Abbah, Abdulhamid, Jaafar, Agbese & Sunday argue that if these figures are computed and multiplied by the number of days (approximately every day for three weeks) on which the president travelled from one part of the country to another, the president's campaign expenditure would exceed the N1-billion ceiling provided for in the 2010 Electoral Act.

In the same vein, the writers quote one of the presidential aspirants, Pat Utomi, of the Social Democratic Mega Party (SDMP), as complaining that President Jonathan's campaign might have cost about N100-million a day, and questioning the source of the funds.

With regard to non-monetary costs, although the massive deployment of security personnel, including the military, meant the level and intensity of violence was not as high as had been feared, there were still substantial cases of violence that led to the loss of human lives and the destruction of property. According to International Crisis Group (2011, p 7):

The rescheduled National Assembly elections on 9 April were heralded by a massive bomb blast within INEC offices in Suleja, near Abuja, causing an unspecified number of deaths and significant damage. There was also a bomb scare in Kaduna the same day. Two bombs exploded in Maiduguri, capital of Borno state and in Bauchi just before the presidential election on 16 April, claiming at least two lives. A few days before the gubernatorial contests, three lives were lost when a bomb exploded in a private house in Kaduna close to the headquarters of the state's law-makers. On 24 April, three lives were lost when bombs exploded again in Maiduguri. Explosions also occurred a few hours before polling units opened on 26 April. The worst violence followed the announcement on 18 April of the results of the presidential election and caught the security and intelligence communities by surprise. It ravaged fourteen Northern states and was reportedly most serious in Adamawa, Kano, Kaduna, Nasarawa, Bauchi and parts of Niger states. Businesses, churches and houses

were torched, looted or destroyed. Over 1,000 people were killed, including an unspecified number of NYSC members. Some female NYSC members were raped or otherwise molested and assaulted. According to the Nigerian Red Cross, about 74,000 people were displaced.

In addition, because of the possibility of violence, the elections involved the deployment of all security forces – the police, the civil defence, the state security service and the military – all costs that are not easily reflected in any estimate.

MAKING SENSE OF THE HIGH COST OF ELECTIONS IN NIGERIA

Nigeria is, by any standards, a large democracy. Its population is estimated at about 170-million and it is the most populous black nation in the world. The land mass is equally massive, which has significant implications for the costs of conducting elections in the country. Nigeria is also a country in transition as well as a post-conflict society with low intensity conflict and flash points in many areas. Democracy is nascent, having emerged from more than three decades of military rule, which eroded many of the society's liberal values.

Due to the absence of a liberal culture and the intense competition for state power, election-related violence is commonplace, thereby increasing the cost of elections. Indeed, the inability to conduct free, fair and credible elections has been a major black spot in Nigeria's democratic experience. The attempt to get the election process right has necessitated starting the registration process afresh for each of the four elections held since the country's return to democracy. While Jega's insistence on a new registration exercise for the 2011 elections was costly, the intention was to lay a solid basis for democratic consolidation by means of comprehensive, accurate and reliable biometric coverage of all eligible voters in the country. The registration exercise significantly increased the cost of the election.

Another reason for the high cost is that the elections were staggered. There were many reasons for this. They include the high level of illiteracy among Nigerian voters which would make it difficult for them to distinguish one ballot paper from another if they were called upon to vote for several different offices at the same time; INEC's inability to cope with the logistics of conducting all the elections in one day; the poor state of infrastructure in the country and the need to checkmate attempts at rigging.

Owing to any one or a combination of these factors elections in the whole or in some parts of the country frequently have to be postponed. For example, the 2011 general elections were postponed because of INEC's logistical problems

and, more importantly, because of the need to prevent politicians from rigging the vote. This postponement is estimated by experts to have cost the nation about N76-billion.

Finally, but perhaps most importantly, the use of advanced technology for the election process, particularly, the voter registration process, accounted for a substantial proportion – about 40% – of the total direct costs of the elections.

CONCLUSION

Elections are always expensive and it is common during election periods for incumbents to embark on a spending spree as they try to impress voters with their commitment to their welfare. Available evidence suggests that voters respond to recent changes in economic conditions more than they do to changes in the past – and more than to absolute levels of economic well-being. This also suggests, though rather less clearly, that changes in disposable income matter more than changes in the GDP (which are presumably less tangible) and which, in turn, matter more than changes in unemployment (which produce relatively few direct losers) and inflation (which produces many losers but also a good many winners).

Literature on the political business cycle has shown how politicians renege on their macroeconomic commitments during election seasons. They tend to expand the economy during election campaigns in an attempt to woo myopic voters, although the long-term results are sub-optimal. Such actions might provoke inflation when they are financed by deficit budgeting (Krause 2005). This situation is further aggravated by the cost of elections.

In poor countries a lot of the spending during election seasons goes into the campaign process and usually involves the use by incumbents of public resources to gain an advantage over opponents in an intense competition for power. In Nigeria there has been a growing concern about the cost of governance and, more recently, about the cost of elections. While there has been serious concern about the remuneration of public officials, which underlines the intense competition for public office, the cost of elections has become an issue of concern, not only because of increasing amounts but also in terms of the real and other costs, such as violence and social instability.

In financial terms the 2011 elections were the costliest in Nigeria's history. While elections are an essential element of democratic rule, the price that is paid in both financial and other terms must be sustainable if democracy is to be sustained and consolidated. This means that Nigeria must make the most of the 2011 registration exercise. An effort must be made to secure the data and put them to proper use in future elections as well as for other purposes so that voter

registration will become an ongoing exercise that will not have to start afresh for each future general election.

Secondly, an effective and reliable voters' register will enable improvements in the integrity of future elections. To this end, we hope that by 2015 INEC will be able to conduct biometric verifications on voting day. To do this, the commission must link its offices in the 36 state capitals digitally to the central database at its headquarters. If there is no need for a fresh registration process the cost of elections should be reduced significantly. There is also a need to explore the possibility of reducing the number of voting days.

Thirdly, INEC must ensure that its process for procuring electoral materials is streamlined and made more transparent. Although electoral materials are sensitive, the late preparation for the election played a role in the logistical lapses that raised the cost of the elections, especially the postponement of the first set of elections a few hours after they began, a situation largely accounted for by the illness and eventual death of President Yar'adua and the attendant handover crisis. It is hoped that there will be no such costly postponements in the future.

Fourthly, Nigerian politicians must find a way of promoting a liberal culture with respect for human rights, especially the right of ordinary citizens to choose leaders through a free and unencumbered electoral process. They must give due regard to electoral rules and to the rule of law. The provisions of the electoral laws with regard to party and campaign finance must be respected.

As it is now, political parties do not observe these rules. They neither keep proper records of membership and income nor make public disclosure of their accounts. The Electoral Act must include provisions that make it feasible to enforce. The Uwais committee recommended the establishment of an electoral offences commission. While this may involve additional expenditure, its effectiveness and success in having electoral offenders punished will reduce electoral malpractice. In relation to party and campaign finance regulation, this may help reduce the role of money in perverting the electoral process and thereby the cost of elections.

Finally, a major non-monetary cost of elections is violence. The electoral process should be an avenue to promote public participation, political education and the exercise of free choice. When the process involves violence it will be characterised by voter apathy and fear that not only threaten democratic rule but the very foundations of the state. Efforts must be made to reduce incidents of violence during elections. This can be achieved by infusing the electoral process with incentives that discourage the resort to violence, which may involve rethinking the electoral system to ensure that it is not a zero-sum game.

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