BVAS, IReV and Democratic Elections in Nigeria

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Abstract The BVAS is a technological tool used to identify and accredit voters' fingerprints and facial recognition prior to voting, whereas the IReV is an online portal where polling unit level results are uploaded, transmitted, and published for the public. The public can set up individual accounts at the online portal's front end, giving them access to all uploaded results stored as PDF files. The public will be more confident in the process and transparency will increase if results are made available down to the polling unit level. Despite the promises of new technologies, dishonest INEC officials used a single button click to steal, rig, and annul voter decisions in elections. In light of this, this study evaluated the performance of BVAS and other new electoral technologies and innovations in the Nigerian general elections of 2023. Qualitative research design and content analysis was used in this study. The study comes to the conclusion that while INEC deployed BVAS and other new electoral technologies and innovations to improve electoral integrity and inspire public confidence in the electoral process, those efforts were not flawless and some INEC officials compromised the electoral process. Undoubtedly, the use of BVAS and other electoral technologies could prevent election rigging and boost public confidence in election results, but some failures in the use of BVAS and IReV have been noted. Therefore, this study recommends among others that the electoral umpire in future general elections should be impartial and nonpartisan. This will ensure that all candidates have an equal chance to win and that Nigerian elections will be held without incident.

Keywords: BVAS, IReV, general elections, electoral integrity, public confidence, rigging

A. Introduction

Under Professor Mahmood Yakubu's direction, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) was put to test in the general election of 2023 with the introduction of the BVAS, which was intended to ensure the legitimacy and integrity of the elections, this is more apparent. In many ways, the BVAS is not a novel invention because it was previously employed to conduct the staggered governorship elections in the states of Ekiti and Osun last year. The conduct of the governorship election in Osun State was found to have some fundamental flaws, which prompted the ongoing legal dispute that jeopardizes the status of the current governor, Senator Ademola Adeleke, as the legitimate victor of the 2022 election. As part of its preparations for the elections in 2023, INEC began a series of awareness-raising campaigns across the nation about the necessity of BIVAS in order to guarantee free, fair, credible, and acceptable elections. The electorate went to their various polling places anticipating casting their votes without being hindered by the laborious

procedure associated with previous elections in the nation in light of the assurance provided by INEC.

Questions have been raised about the effectiveness of the Bimodal Voter Accreditation System and Election Result Viewing Portal used by the Independent National Electoral Commission to improve the electoral process following the conclusion of the presidential and National Assembly elections. During the recently completed presidential and National Assembly elections, the Independent National Electoral Commission's Bimodal Voter Accreditation System and Election Result Viewing Portal fell short of expectations. Given that some of the candidates have already begun the legal process to challenge the results of the elections, the poor performance of BVAS and IReV in their first significant stress test may have cast a shadow over the 2023 presidential and National Assembly elections. In their initial national rollout, BVAS and IReV did not facilitate the electoral process they were intended for; instead, they have increased concerns about the credibility of the elections in 2023 (African Union, 2023).

The commission has decided to launch a dedicated public portal, the INEC Result Viewing (IReV), that will allow Nigerians to view Polling Unit results in real time as the voting closes on Election Day, in order to further strengthen the transparency in the election result management system. The ten most pervasive flaws in Nigeria's election result management process, according to INEC, are: falsifying votes at polling units; falsifying the number of accredited voters; collating false results; mutilating results and computational errors; swapping of results sheets; forging of results sheets; snatching and destruction of results sheets; and obtaining declaration and return involuntarily. BVAS and IReV technologies, according to INEC, will address these flaws (INEC, 2023). According to INEC, both technologies play crucial roles in elections and reinforce one another. However, elections can be rigged with the click of a button by corrupt election officials, who can also change voter preferences. Disruptive cyber attacks may also be used against technology tools. These problems highlight the need for increased transparency from election management organizations in order to boost public confidence in electoral technologies. Therefore, this study evaluated the performance of BVAS and other new electoral innovations in Nigeria's 2023 general elections.

B. Review Of Related Literature
BVAS, IReV and 2023 General Elections

In its determination to conduct the general elections in 2023 without fear or favor and to ensure free, fair, credible, inclusive, and transparent elections in order to strengthen Nigeria's democratic culture and produce acceptable election results, the commission has over time expressed its willingness to put the provisions of the new electoral law into practice. The newly signed Electoral Act contains several interesting amendments, including the conduct of early party primaries by political parties, technological advancements in the voting process, an extension of the campaign period for political parties, the establishment of a central electronic voter database, a revised definition of "over-voting," the exclusion of political appointees from serving as voting delegates or aspirants, and the death of an electoral candidate. The use of electronic devices, such as smartcard readers, electronic voting machines, and other technological devices, in the voter registration process and the general election administration is provided for by the new act. However, the implementation of the Bimodal Voter Accreditation System is one of the new innovations in the Electoral Act (BVAS). INEC used BVAS, the INEC Voter Enrolment

Device (IVED), the INEC Result Viewing Portal (IRev), and other technologies in the elections of 2023 (INEC, 2023).
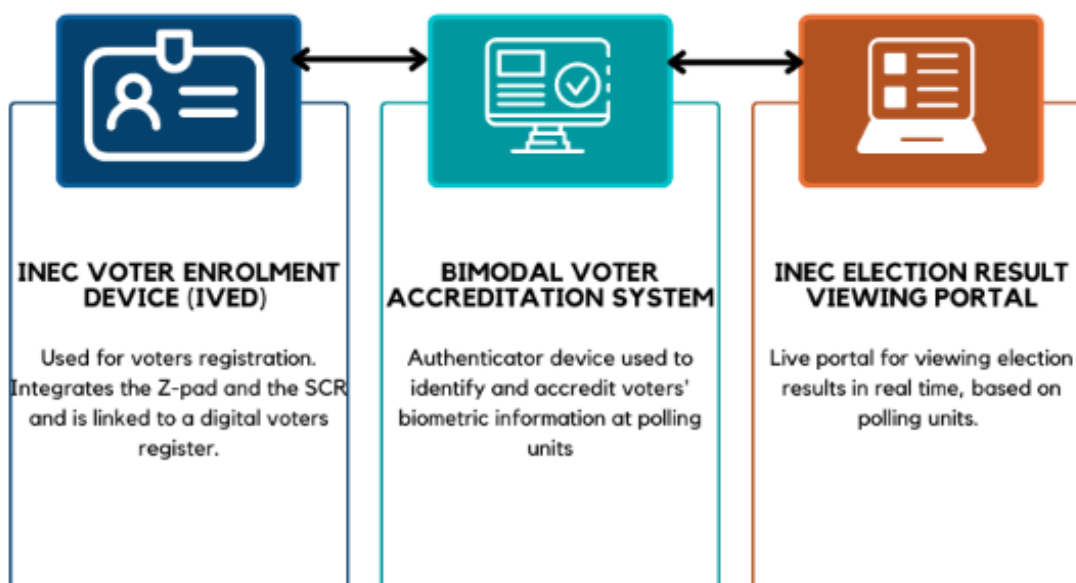
The BVAS is an electronic tool that can read a Permanent Voter's Card (PVC) and authenticate voters using their fingerprints to show that they are allowed to cast a ballot at a specific polling place. It is a piece of technology used to verify and identify voters using their fingerprints and facial recognition before they cast their ballots. The device is also used to take pictures of the Form EC8A polling unit result sheet and upload those pictures online. In order to verify and authenticate the voter, the Assistant Presiding Officer (APO) must scan the barcode or QR code on the PVC or voter's register, enter the last six digits of the voter's Voter Identity Number (VIN), or type the voter's last name. BVAS is a technological advancement designed to increase election results transparency and increase public confidence in the results. During voter registration, BVAS also serves as the INEC Voter Enrollment Device (IVED). Additionally, it has replaced the use of incident forms during Election Day accreditation. IReV, on the other hand, is an online platform where polling unit-level results are directly uploaded, transmitted, and made public. The public can create personal accounts at the online portal's front end, giving them access to all uploaded results stored as PDF files (INEC, 2023).

However, there were some issues with the Bimodal Voter Accreditation System (BVAS) during the general elections of 2023. Despite training on the use of the new technology tools being provided to all INEC ad hoc staff, recruitment issues and ongoing capacity gaps hindered its efficient implementation. The situation was particularly serious in the northwest, where 23% of observers reported instances in which voter accreditation were completed in polling places where BVAS was in use, even when the voter was not detected by the BVAS reader. This was against the law because it stipulates that in order to cast a ballot, every voter must first register with BVAS. In the event of a disputed outcome, the results from BVAS are given primacy under Section 64(6) of the Electoral Act. Even though it was less noticeable elsewhere in the nation, 8.7% of observers saw it happen in the south-south, 5.9% in the southwest, 9.6% in the northeast, 4.2% in the southeast, and 7.7% in the north central zone. Our observers also noticed technical problems, with 23.1% of them reporting seeing BVAS malfunctions. With 42.7% of observers reporting a malfunction and the northeast had the highest prevalence, but the northwest also had a high percentage (28.7%) (African Union, 2023).

Positively, INEC's contingency planning was largely successful; more than two-thirds of the technical issues were fixed within an hour, and accreditation moved along quickly where the technology was functional. However, occasionally the reader's malfunction resulted in protracted wait times for everyone in the voting line. For instance, due to broken BVAS machines in some parts of Rivers State, Delta State, Lagos State, Kwara State, Imo State, and Enugu State, to name a few, many potential voters waited for more than three hours. The failure, according to Governor Nyesom Wike of Rivers State, is proof of INEC's lack of readiness for the 2023 elections. He and his wife were both affected by the BIVAS glitches. The electoral body could use the BVAS in some practice elections before the 2023 elections to evaluate its reliability, effectiveness, security, and capacity before it is finally used for the general election. More importantly, INEC thoroughly audited BVAS to guard against potential voter disenfranchisement. In off-cycle elections where both the IREV and BVAS have been tested, INEC was able to improve election procedures by transferring the management of particular election procedures from people

(who may be partisan) to technology. The IREV and BVAS were both referred to as the third force in the most recent elections in Ekiti and Osun, improving the consistency between INEC's official results and the total from polling units (African Union, 2023).

2023: INEC'S TECHNOLOGY FLOW

INEC VOTER ENROLMENT DEVICE (IVED)	BIMODAL VOTER ACCREDITATION SYSTEM	INEC ELECTION RESULT VIEWING PORTAL
Used for voters registration. Integrates the Z-pad and the SCR and is linked to a digital voters register.	Authenticator device used to identify and accredit voters' biometric information at polling units	Live portal for viewing election results in real time, based on polling units.

Source: INEC, 2023

Theoretically, using biometric information to verify voters' identities at polling places should go smoothly and ensure that voter fraud is kept to a minimum. While it had primarily planned to use BVAS, this is not always the case, and INEC used Smart Card Readers (SCR) in the 2021 Anambra Guber elections. Additionally, in 2023, 176,846 polling locations across 774 local government areas will be used by an estimated 95 million registered voters, with 10 million new voters added to the voter list. INEC faces enormous electoral challenges, with new technologies being just one of them. Therefore, despite the Commission's assertions to the contrary, it is possible that INEC will use the SCR as a fallback for BVAS devices in some polling units. The INEC Election Result Viewing Portal (IReV) and the Bimodal Voter Accreditation System (BVAS) are two technological advancements lauded for increasing election results transparency and elevating voter confidence in recent elections. Nevertheless, during the 2023 presidential election, there were instances of failed fingerprint scans and device malfunctions in numerous locations across the nation. The introduction of BVAS and IReV is inimical to political actors determined to frustrate the will of the people at all costs, despite the fact that public confidence in electoral outcomes has increased. Thus, reports of alleged attempts to thwart INEC's plans to use the BVAS and IReV to protect the election's integrity are not shocking. The lawsuit filed in the Imo State High Court to obtain a restraining order against INEC to stop the deployment of the BVAS for the general elections serves as a prime example. When electoral technologies are compromised, as they were in Nigeria's general elections

in 2023, it can increase election credibility while simultaneously eroding public confidence in elections. This has led to debates and contestations around the world about the introduction of electoral technologies (European Union,2023).

Elections and Democratic Governance in Nigeria

Undoubtedly, democracy is the best type of government. It is a government that came about as a result of popular vote. The people have the right to choose who represents them in government. The politicians who represent them in the executive and legislative branches of government are chosen by the people. In contrast to a dictatorship, democracy ensures that everyone's civil liberties are protected. Up until the latter half of the 20th century, the majority of the nations in Africa, South America, and Asia were governed by military governments or other dictatorships. Nigeria and other African states can learn a lot from the older democracies in Western Europe and North America, which are great role models. Elections that can be trusted are essential to the survival of democracy. Regular elections held to transfer authority from one group of people to another must be fair and free. Election results must reflect the electorate's political preferences. Therefore, when free and fair elections were used to elect a government, that government is considered to be legitimate. There have been instances in young democracies where losing candidates have been declared winners; these electoral frauds have always led to political crises. Countries should avoid conducting rigged elections because of their political repercussions, even though the courts were able to resolve some electoral cases and reinstate the winners to their legitimate positions (Osunyikanmi, 2018).

In a democracy, elections are crucial because they serve as a platform for the expression of the will of the people through legitimacy and the transfer of power. Yusuf and Zaheruddin (2015) define an election as a post-mortem that examines the track record of elected officials whose actual performance may have little to do with the promises they made prior to being elected. The five general elections held in Nigeria since the restoration of democracy in 1999 (in 2003, 2007, 2011, 2015, 2019, and 2023) have not, however, satisfied the demand for democratic governance in the nation. As a result of these characterized irregularities, the credibility of those elections is called into question. It is important to remember that the fight for democracy in Nigeria was conceived not only as a means to an end, but also as a means of establishing responsible political institutions that support a government that is answerable to the people. In the meantime, democratic governance is not just about elections and the handover of power to civilians; it also involves the rule of law, adherence to the constitution and basic human rights, socioeconomic empowerment, peace, and the safety of people and their property, among other things. The current state of Nigerian democracy's transformation of its citizens' political and socioeconomic empowerment is still an illusion. As a result, it prompts important queries like, "What does democracy mean and which democracy? (Bello, 2014). These questions are important because, in Nigeria, when democracy is fully implemented, it is anticipated that a large portion of the population will experience happiness as opposed to a small "transnationally oriented elite". Additionally, it is anticipated to promote equality, bring about a gradual and incremental socioeconomic and political transformation, and genuinely develop a setting that will permit individuals of all social strata to exercise control and authority over the political and economic processes that have an impact on them (Ighodalo, 2012).

Elections and democracy go hand in hand, but they also serve as the cornerstones of democratic governance, ensuring that the government is accountable and responsive. Sadly, elections in Nigeria have come to be associated with fraud despite the importance of credible elections for democratic governance. Elections are frequently marked by dishonest maneuvers that thwart the public's hopes for democracy. Election results in Nigeria have frequently been linked to political unrest, violence, and crises. The results of numerous elections in Africa have been so hotly contested, according to Ibrahim (2007), that the chances of the democratic ideals surviving have been jeopardized. As a result, the democratic feature is hopeless and unwelcoming. According to Imobighe (2013), the bizarre manipulation of the electoral process, whereby election riggers end up being the net beneficiaries of the electoral process, has been the tragedy of the nation's democratic experience since the re-emergence of civilian rule in 1999. This has led to a great deal of resentment among the electorate. For instance, politicians who were elected after paying their way into office spend most of their free time raising more money to win the next election. They do not feel compelled to answer to the voters. We will examine the difficulties of democratic governance in Nigeria in the discussion that follows. The fourth republic in Nigeria experienced a democratic governance crisis, despite the fact that the democratization era had encouraged democratic governance on the one hand.

On election night, INEC's failure to promptly address stakeholder concerns about logistical and security lapses, as well as its failure to provide the public with access to the presidential results on the IReV, were seen as eroding confidence in the institution. The main characteristic of INEC's communication strategy was the dissemination of general information through stakeholder consultations and frequently vague press conferences. The safeguards for the integrity and reliability of the BVAS, the procedure for collecting PVCs, updates to voter registration, and the justification for court orders changing candidate lists were all things that the general public lacked easy access to. The process would have been significantly more transparent and certain if this information had been made public (European Union, 2023). On several fronts, INEC had to contend with a hostile environment for election administration. Notably, its employees and offices were the targets of violent attacks in several regions of the nation, occasionally impeding its business operations. 16 attacks on INEC staff and facilities have been documented since the 28 February 2022 election notice, the majority of which have occurred in the South-East, including in the final weeks before the elections.

In order to spread its messages about topics like the operation of the BVAS and IReV, electoral offenses, and voting procedures, INEC collaborated on voter education with civil society, state agencies, media outlets, and influencers. Despite these efforts, the public was generally misinformed about the differences between real-time transmission of the results forms for public scrutiny and manual collation of results. Additionally, little effort was made to address recurring issues like vote buying, which goes hand in hand with financing illegal campaigns. The introduction by INEC, for the first time in a general election, of new technology for voter verification and electronic transmission of results forms boosted public enthusiasm for the 2023 election. The forms were scanned and uploaded using BVAS, which was also used to verify voters using their fingerprints and facial biometrics. The IReV portal was used by INEC to publish results, enhancing transparency and building trust while reducing fraud. Both the hiring and training of key technical support personnel and poll workers who handled BVAS were delayed. A BVAS offline option to upload results forms in case of a spotty internet connection was largely

unused on Election Day, which contributed to problems with the results forms' transmission. EU EOM observers noted that BVAS did not always send the total number of accredited voters on a regular basis after the closing. Furthermore, unlike House of Representatives and Senate scans, presidential election results forms were frequently impossible to upload.

In the general election of 2023, observers in states like Kwara, Imo, and Bayelsa all reported a significant increase in the use of basic foodstuffs, household goods, and materials being exchanged for votes. Given the limited availability of cash, there was evidence that politicians in Lagos were willing to offer bank transfers to voters under the guise of "business assistance schemes," which was ostensibly a clever way to buy votes. Nevertheless, despite the lack of cash, some politicians were able to acquire cash; however, some of them were caught by security personnel before they could distribute it. The Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) detained a person in Lagos on Election Day with N32.4 million in new naira notes that were allegedly intended to be used for vote buying. In Rivers state, another candidate for the House of Representatives was detained in the run-up to the election with nearly US$500,000 in cash, which the investigating authorities claimed he intended to use to buy votes.

Intimidation was observed all over the nation and was reported by 3.4% of observers. It was frequently related to identity or political party affiliation. The northwest, south-south, and southeast were where it was most prevalent. In one instance of voter intimidation, party agents were standing outside the voting booth instructing voters on how to cast their ballots in full view of INEC ad hoc staff, according to a report from an observer in the state of Anambra. Some of the intimidation intended to suppress votes was centered on ethnic identity, and was typically carried out by thugs from political parties or people who were only loosely affiliated. Thugs in Lagos threatened members of specific ethnic groups because the dichotomy between being an indigenous person versus a migrant was prevalent. In some areas of the states of Imo and Anambra, the BVAS readers were also the target. Although replacement readers have been found, this voter suppression strategy may become more common in the future because voting cannot continue without a functioning reader. Despite the general lack of security in the nation, incidents of violence during the election processes were not significantly influenced by this, with incidents primarily the domain of political thugs.

Credible, free, and fair elections are a byproduct of citizen participation in the political process and are essential for fostering the public's confidence in the executive branch. The Nigerian public has gradually become accustomed to losing faith in its leadership as a result of years of abuse and neglect. People are essentially no longer connected to the government in any political sense, but also in a sense of civic, moral, and ethical duty. They no longer hold high hopes for their government, and they no longer feel a sense of duty and social responsibility. Because of the unresolved issues of poverty, hunger, pandemics, environmental degradation, energy shortages, and security threats, to name a few, citizens are increasingly demanding practical solutions to everyday issues. Democracy in Nigeria is undoubtedly threatened by the widespread lack of political will on the part of the government, the sluggish judicial system, the politicization of the anti-corruption campaign, and the elite conspiracy.

The trusting relationship necessary to establish between the government and the governed for the realization of good governance will not take place without the reawakening of the culture of accountability and transparency lost over time. To produce

devoted, informed, and God-fearing people who will run the country, the political and administrative machinery in Nigeria that propels people to power needs to be completely overhauled (Adekeye & Chima, 2022). It is necessary to take into account the behavioural pattern, social context, and cultural milieu of the people for whom the service is intended in order for it to be successfully delivered in Nigeria. If the attitude of the politicians and bureaucrats changes and they are receptive to the initiative of sharing information and power with the youths, it can be made practically feasible. The identification of corruption as the largest albatross is a recurrent decimal in the explanation of Nigeria's development dilemma. Corruption looms large over almost every aspect of the Nigerian economy (Salihu & Yakubu, 2021). The most significant obstacle to Nigeria's development is corruption. The trajectory of corruption's mutation is obvious. The epochal transformation of Nigeria's productive forces from a variety of cash crops to an oil economy is proportionally correlated with the level of corruption there. It is of utmost importance that the new democratic leadership had to rely on political power in order to establish their economic foundation (Nnali, 2020). Unfortunately, it led to a trend where acquiring political power became the primary goal. Corruption was brought about by the ruling class's use of political influence to make money in the years after independence.

One is likely to assume that there is no control mechanism that could be used to enforce accountability due to the pervasive corruption, abuse of office, and general decline in other ethical standards in the nation. However, this is untrue. Numerous legal, quasi-legal, and other watchdog institutions have been developed in Nigeria with the express purpose of regulating public service ethics. Despite this, as we have seen, public accountability is constantly declining. Despite the restoration of multiparty politics more than ten years ago, Nigeria has not been able to achieve the high level of accountability that it once boasted of. This indicates that either the type of multiparty system adopted failed to democratize the nation or that democratization is not a requirement for accountability in governance. It is very clear that the former is true (Salihu & Yakubu, 2021). Despite the institutional framework put in place to checkmate corruption by succeeding governments, it only flourished luxuriantly. Lack of political will, the active complicity of those in positions of power, and the unaccountable nature of governance in Nigeria's political history all seemed to have undermined these frameworks (Odusote, 2014).

The 2023 presidential election, however, was the worst in the nation's history. The INEC chairman, Professor Mahmood Yakubu, had pledged a free, fair, and credible election through the use of The Bimodal Voter Accreditation System (BVAS), which would replace traditional ballots (Kohnert, 2023). With the help of voter fingerprint and facial recognition, this biometric technology was created to validate Permanent Voter Cards (PVCs) and enable human recognition. The device can also take pictures of the Form EC8A polling unit result sheet and upload them to the INEC platform for viewing election results (IReV). IReV is an online platform where polling unit results are uploaded, transmitted, and made publicly available (Hassan, 2023). In order to access the polling unit results posted on the website, users of the portal can also set up personal accounts. Prof. Mahmood Yakubu's special adviser, Prof. Mohammad Kuna, claims that it is impossible for anyone to tamper with the results that are uploaded to IReV via BVAS due to the electronic device's design. But did the BVAS completely eradicate election fraud? Kohnert (2012).

On February 25, 2023, the Nigerian presidential election was marred by voter intimidation, fraud, and vandalism. On the basis of their racial and geographic affiliations, many people lost their rights. According to allegations that the All Progressives Congress,

APC, used INEC officials to conduct widespread thumb-printing at various polling units during the Presidential and National Assembly elections, BVAS was not used in certain locations (Hassan, 2023). After the election was conducted in numerous polling places across the nation, the electoral umpire was unable to upload the results to its server. There have been allegations of underage voting and rubber stamping of ballots in favor of the All-Progressive Congress (APC) in the country's northern region (Kohnert, 2023). The "exodus syndrome" is brought on by the youth's lack of faith in the electoral process. If this does not change, the country will continue to experience chaos and economic and political decline.

C. Research Methods

The research method is the process of looking for a thorough, clear, and comprehensive explanation of issues in light of the available data in order to advance current understanding. It might be necessary to employ more than one of the common types of investigation methods in a given research. While defining the current situation through field research, which is known as a primary source, one could investigate the solution to a particular difficult of past events through an investigation of records, which is known as a secondary source. For this study, relevant data were extracted from public records, journals, books, and other sources using the secondary method of data collection. On the other hand, the study adopted an exploratory research approach. This is due to the fact that it piques the researchers' interest and drives them to fully comprehend the subject.

D. Conclusion and Recommendations

Despite the introduction of BIVAS and other technologies, hopes and expectations were dashed when INEC failed to live up to them in some areas. The most recent general elections in 2023 still had issues from previous elections. The European Union Election Observation Mission (EU EOM) to Nigeria 2023 presidential election stated in its preliminary findings that the presidential election was marred by a lack of transparency and operational failures due to the apparent failure of BVAS at some of the voting centers. Despite the fact that the elections were held on the scheduled date, the operational shortcomings severely damaged public confidence in the system and put the right to vote in jeopardy. However, INEC's ineffective planning during crucial phases and poor public relations efforts lowered confidence in the procedure, even on Election Day. It was believed that the introduction of the BVAS and the INEC Results Viewing Portal (IReV) was a crucial step in ensuring the legitimacy and integrity of the elections. However, using the BVAS to upload the results did not go as planned raising questions.

Nigerians, particularly the youth, had expressed a strong interest in voting in this election despite well-documented instances of insecurity in all six geopolitical zones and despite the fuel and currency shortages that threatened to scuttle the election. Over 70% of the 9.46 million new voters the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) added to the rolls before the 2023 election were young people (aged 18 to 34), making up 39.7% of the 93.4 million electorate as a whole. But given that youth do not constitute a homogeneous group, it appears that ethnic identity continues to play a significant role in determining voter preference. The All Progressive Congress (APC) and People's Democratic Party (PDP) appear to be the only parties that have engaged in vote buying in the last two elections, with the Labour Party emerging as a noteworthy political force during a time of financial hardship.

Despite the citizens of Nigeria and INEC's optimism that technology could revolutionize the country's elections; the way the technology was used during the results transmission stage has damaged the public's perception of the electoral process's transparency and accountability. IReV was promoted by INEC as its assurance of the validity of the voting process in the run-up to the elections. A significant failure of the organization was its disregard for the procedures it had previously made public. It is concerning that a sizable portion of Nigerians were prevented from voting by technical disenfranchisement and voter suppression. It might exacerbate voter apathy in subsequent elections and further erode faith in the electoral system's capacity to create a more democratic society. When collation at the ward level is complete, the Form EC8B, ward collation result sheet, should be uploaded on the IReV portal, according to him, in order to increase transparency of the collation process. This will act as oversight for ward collation, the weakest link in the value chain for election results. By uploading the results sheet, citizens and stakeholders will be able to monitor and track the results collation process. Ahead of upcoming elections, the following suggestions were made:

1. The electoral umpire in upcoming general elections needs to be impartial and nonpartisan. This will ensure that all candidates have an equal chance to win and that Nigerian elections will be held without incident.

2. IReV's malfunction has prevented it from bringing about the expected accountability, which has put INEC's credibility in jeopardy. The Electoral Commission must be forthright and truthful with Nigerians and offer a thorough justification of what went wrong. If there was sabotage, the offenders need to be prosecuted.

3. In order to enhance voter accreditation and image quality, the BVAS software needs to be upgraded and modified. A feature that enables the camera to recognize or capture/focus on the object of interest, such as the entire result sheet, should be added to the device's IOS.

4. In order to prevent significant instances of candidates being "elected" by the courts rather than the electorate, INEC and the judiciary must work effectively together to properly adjudicate complaints about the election process.

5. There should be a post-election review that is independent, conducted by observers from civil society organizations and legal bodies, and that produces a report and recommendations on how to move forward with improving election management, operational deployment, and the roles of INEC and other important stakeholders.

6. A thorough and representative methodology that incorporates stakeholder consultation and public participation should serve as the foundation for pre-deployment tests. Public support for the BVAS and IReV will be gained by disclosing the results of the tests and exercises, and fostering opportunities for independent verification and audits of electoral technologies will be essential to fostering public confidence.

7. Especially on Election Day and immediately afterwards, social media companies need to improve their capacity to react quickly to untruths spreading on their platform. To enable quick response and action, there should be improved collaboration with reputable fact-checking platforms.

8. Based on the recent deployment of the BVAS and IReV, there is a relationship between the quality of the election staff and management of the device and the quality of results sheets uploaded on the results viewing portal. In a recent Election Results Analysis Dashboard (ERAD) report, poorly captured images of results sheets and incorrect or incomplete forms were uploaded on the IReV. INEC should make significant investment in the training of Polling Unit officials, with a special focus on result transmission, ballot paper accounting as well as the capturing of Polling Unit results using the BVAS.

9. Security agencies deployed for election duties must maintain neutrality and professionalism, and deliver effective proactive/preventive policing rather than reactive policing.

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