

Article

The 2023 General Elections and Nigeria's International Relations

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Abstract: This work was on the 2023 General Elections and Nigeria's International Relations. The aim of the work was to examine and analyse the international dimensions of the 2023 Presidential Election in Nigeria. The work adopted the theory of sovereignty to emphasize the importance of states as the major Actor in International Relations. It is for the enhancement of relationships that elections carried in promotion of democracy all over the world attracts international awareness. Nigeria as a major Actor in International relations conducted her Presidential Election on the 25th of February 2023. Various foreign actors and forces participated directly and indirectly in the elections but the promotion of peaceful coexistence as one of the essential principles of international relations guided the reactions and counter reactions to the election. The international observers guided by the United Nations 2005 Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation and Code of Conduct for International Election Observers, played by the rules adhering strictly to the principles of sovereignty and non-interference in the internal affairs of states to situate Nigeria properly in the international society.

Keywords: International Relations, Election, State, Sovereignty, Democracy, United Nations

1. Introduction

Developments in the international system that have enhanced international relations have been facilitated by various shoots. As relationships increased in tandem with the evolutions, rules and standards have to be put in place to enrich co-operation. The United Nations (UN) has played out standing roles in facilitating, encouraging and refining these relationships. With the adoption of democracy as a globally accepted system of government, various efforts have been put in place to sustain it. As a people oriented government with maximum participation rates of people, elections comes as a major criteria to properly integrate and incorporate the people in democracy. Nigeria is one of the most heterogeneous States in the world, with the population of over 200 million and the most populous black nation with over 250 ethnic groups and several sub-groups. The adoption of the federal system of government and democracy since independence in Nigeria have undergone various phases [1], [2], [3].

The 2023 General Elections in Nigeria came with the Fourth Republic in the democratic journey of Nigeria. The announcement of the timetable for the elections by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) on April 2021 heralded preparations, permutations, alignments, etc by all stakeholders in the election processes [4]. The 2023 General Elections have been described as the most competitive election to be held in post-colonial Nigeria. It was the first time presidential election was keenly contested by three major candidates, that generated so much contentions, leading to an examination of the international dimensions in all of the 2023 General elections [5], [6]. All the international ambits to the 2023 General Elections in Nigeria were all geared towards the enhancement

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and promotion of peaceful coexistence as one of the cardinal principles of international relations.

Theoretical Framework

Sovereignty is a central concept in international relations, international law, political theory, political philosophy and modern history. Virtually all of the earth's land is parcelled by lines, visible and invisible. Within these lines are some form of political organisation with authority that we call sovereignty. According to Edking et al, in the course of the development of the international society, sovereignty emerged as an expression of a new understanding of the character and location of legitimate authority that explicitly challenged the transcendental authority of Christianity and the hierarchical orders of feudalism and empire [2]. It expressed and legitimized a new form of political community extending in territorial space and separated from other communities, extending into other territorial space including air, sea and land. Sovereignty, thus is a concept tightly attached to statehood. It is a constituent element of the State, because in every state, there is an authority whose will is legally binding over all individuals and associations within the confines of its territory [7].

In International law, sovereignty is a concept that is closely tied with States. It is the concept of the absolute and unlimited authority in a State to which all persons and things are subject. According to Hensley, 1986, sovereignty is a theory or assumption about political power. According to Merriam 1968, the beginning of the theory of sovereignty can be traced to Aristotle's politics and the classical body of the Roman Law: According to Aristotle in his politics, there is the recognition of the fact that there must be a supreme power existing in the State, and that power, may be in the hands of one, or a few, or of many. Among the Romans, the idea of sovereignty was seen in a popular expression, "the will of the prince has the force of law, since the people have transferred to him all their right and power" [2].

The first systematic discussion of the nature of sovereignty was made in France by Jean Bodin when France was evolving from feudalism through civil war, into a centralised State. Sovereignty is the central theme in Bodin's political philosophy. For Bodin, it is on sovereignty that the definition of citizenship, the classification of forms of State, the identity of the state and the essential and vital element of the commonwealth depends upon. Whenever territory is reduced to legal power, some entities must be isolated as its sovereign. That entity is the State. The Legal competence of States includes considerable liberties in respect of internal organisation.

According to Westphalia doctrine legal concept of sovereignty, rulers or legitimate authorities would recognise no internal equals within the territory's sovereign borders; giving the State the Supreme authority to make and enforce laws that there should be no intervention by other States in her internal affairs. The State has total control over resources, events, outcomes, national activities, external impacts etc, without interference from other States. The State thus exercise comprehensive Supreme, autonomous, absolute, inalienable and exclusive jurisdiction over her designated territorial domain. Sovereignty is indivisible. According to Merriam 1968, Bodin's theory of Sovereignty became the theoretical bulwark against particularism and antinationalism that formed the theoretical basis for the 17th and 18th century absolutism, and became the philosophical foundation of modern theory of sovereignty. His work was the first systematic study of the essential nature of the supreme power in sovereignty.

Sovereignty is a theory or assumption about political power. It is a term that express the idea of a final and absolute authority in the political community. The origin and history of the concept of sovereignty are closely linked with the nature, the origin and the history of the State. The State is one, among the various political institutions which society developed. It is a distinctive political institution and a particular leans of organising politics which societies have adopted at a particular stage in their evolution. The power and competence of the political system has varied from society to society and from time to

time in every society. In international practice, the existence of a sovereign authority within the separate community is universally recognised as the essential qualification of its membership in the International Community.

The State

The State is an outstanding concept in International Relations. It is the major Actor in International Relations. The State is regarded as the institutional aspect of political interaction. The State can be seen as a geographically delimited segment of the society united by a common obedience to a single authority. It can be espied as a territory in which a single authority exercises sovereign power (de jure or de facto). The State can be said to be the territorial parcel into which the world is divided, with a population, government and capacity to enter into relations with other entities. Territory is a basic characteristic of a State, because all territorial units are subject to territorial sovereignty and jurisdiction.

The development of international law gives exclusive authority to States within an accepted territorial framework. Most nations developed through close relationships with the land they inhabited. Thus, the principle of respect for territorial integrity of States is one of the lynch-pins of international relations. Article I of the Montevideo Convention of Rights and Duties of States 1933, laid the most widely accepted foundation for statehood in International Law [8], [9]. According to the Convention, the State must possess.

1. A permanent population
2. A defined territory
3. A government
4. A capacity to enter into relations with other States

The Arbitration Commission of the European Conference on Yugoslavia 1995, in Opinion No. 1, declared that the State is a community which consists of a territory and a population, subject to an organised political authority [10], [2]. Oppenheim's international law provides that a State is in existence when a people is settled in a territory under its own sovereign its own government. For the territory and its people to function effectively, it needs some form of government or central control.

In the international system, the existence of sovereign authority within the separate community is universally recognised as the essential qualification of its membership of the international community. The State is indeed the key political institution in global politics, and boundaries between nation-states remain the critical dividing lines in international relations. Thus, the State is a political and geographical entity. The main components of the State are:

1. Decision-Making Structures (executives, parliaments or legislative, parties)
2. Decision-Enforcing Institutions (bureaucracies, parastatals or organisations, security forces)
3. Decision-Mediating Bodies (courts, tribunals and investigatory commissions).

The character of a State in any particular society is determined by the pattern of organisation of these institutions.

Democracy

Democracy literally means "rule by the people". Democracy as a word derived from the Greek words demos and Kratein has a Greek foundation. In the ancient Greece, democracy meant direct and active participation of the citizens in the affairs of the Polis or City-State. It is this Greek conception that democracy has been defined, though in various dimensions, but all bows to a people oriented government. Guaba 2005, defines democracy as a form of government where the ultimate authority of government is vested in the common people so that public policy is made to conform to the will of the people, and to serve the interests of the people [4]. Enemuo 2015 see democracy as a set of ideals, institutions and processes of governance that allows the broad mass of the people to choose their leaders and that, guarantees them a wide range of civic rights [3].

Democracy as a form of government is all inclusive through representation, hence we see democracy as a representative form of government. The people centered nature of democracy can be viewed from the principles of democracy that include;

1. liberty
2. Equality
3. Fraternity
4. Fundamental right to the people
5. Independence of the judiciary
6. Welfarism
7. Press freedom

Also conditions for the success of democracy, also in fulfilment of the principles of democracy revolves around the following

- a. Sound system of education
- b. Enlightened citizenship
- c. Political awakening
- d. Freedom
- e. Equality
- f. Law and order
- g. Co-operation
- h. High moral standards
- i. Tolerance and spirit of unity
- j. Decentralization of powers
- k. Social and economic security
- l. Sound party system
- m. Independent, impartial and periodic elections
- n. Political Security
- o. Good Administration
- p. Economic prosperity
- q. Good and wise leadership

From the above idea, it is obvious that democracy is a government organised according to the principles of popular participation in the choice of leaders and guarantees individual liberties.

Essential features of democracy include the following

1. Right to vote and be voted for (universal adult suffrage)
2. Periodic Elections
3. Independence of the judiciary to protect the rights of citizens
4. Majority rule (Wikipedia)

These also add to the people centeredness of democracy.

Election

Election is basically about selecting and electing people to become one's representative in any political system. According to Benoit, et al 2014, election is the formal process of selecting or rejecting. According to Benoit, et al 2014, election is the formal process of selecting a person for public office, or, of accepting or rejecting a political proposition by voting. Elections present a legitimate symbolic ritual of choice. It serves to create, heighten and strengthen political consciousness among the people. It is a pre-requisite for the protection and advancement of interests. It is an institutionalised procedure for choosing office holders [11].

Election can be seen as the manner of choice agreed upon by a group of people which enables them to select one or a few people, out of many, to occupy one or a number of positions of authority. This manner of choice usually involves rules and regulations designed to ensure a certain degree of fairness and justice to all concerned. It is the most modern form of recruitment of personnel into public offices. According to Okeke 2015, elections are processes through which people choose their leaders and indicate their preferred public policies and programmes by voting. Elections also serve as a means through which citizens of a given society reject those they do not want to be governed by, or leaders who have not governed well [12]. Elections are a device for mobilizing the masses approval and even enthusiasm for Party policies, while giving them the feeling, however spurious it may seem to democratic eyes, that they are participating in the nations governing process. Elections are used to establish popular control over public officials and to create popular support for leaders and policies of the government. It is a device for filling an office or post, through choices made by a designed body of people; the electorate.

Elections is an important element of modern representative government. It is so closely tied to the growth and development of democratic political order that it is now generally held to be the single most important indicator of the presence or absence of democratic, government. Election is one of the fundamental principles of democracy. So essential are elections to democracy, that a society cannot be regarded as democratic if it does not conduct at least periodic elections. Elections provide an avenue for a practical fulfilment of the political theory of popular sovereignty which gives ultimate power to the people. Through elections, a political authority that allocates the right to command and the duty to obey is established. The prospects of election providing the institutional mechanism for a viable democratic culture is dependent on a free and fair process. The credibility of the outcome of elections depends largely on the process that produced it. The electoral process not only affects the outcome of elections but also the voting behaviour of the people and their perception of the political system.

International Relations

International relations is the sum total of interactions, transactions and activities in the international system. It is an encapsulation of all relationships across national boundaries. Onuoha 2008 defines international relations as the systematic and patterned interactions or transactions between States and non-state Actors in the international system [8]. Mingst 2004 defines international relations as the study of interactions among the various actors that participate in international politics; including States, International Organisations, sub national entities, bureaucracies, local governments and individuals. Ogaba 2000 broadly defined international relations as all activities, public and private that extend, or have the potential of extending beyond the territorial boundaries of a State. These activities are vast and include all movements of people, goods, actions, ideas across national boundaries [6].

International relations studies focuses on diverse issues such as international trade, international migrations, tourism, transportation, communications, environmental issues, as well as the development of international values and ethics. International relations is a field that analyses foreign policy and political processes between States and developments in the international system. International relations borders on the political, economic, social and cultural interactions among international actors. It is all kinds of relations traversing state boundaries of economic, legal, political and all human activities, originating on one side of a State, and affecting the wider society. Its all of the complete interactions of the various peoples, and cultures inhabiting the world society. All the systematic and patterned interactions are based on rules geared towards peaceful coexistence.

Frederick, S Dum in Ghosh 2009 see international relations as the actual relations that take place across national boundaries including the body of knowledge which we have, of those relations at any given time. Hoksti 1977 confirms international relations as all forms

of interactions between members of separate societies, whether government sponsored or not [8]. Goldstein and Pevehouse 2008 affirms international relations as relations among world's government and are closely connected with other actors, as International Organisations, Transnational Corporations, Individuals and other social structures, including economic structures, domestic politics and also with geographic and historical influences (most of the Authors Views are in Chukwu 2024 [13].

According to Igwe 2008, many rules, treaties and conventions, both bilateral, multilateral, regional and global have emerged, governing relations between States and to a much lesser extent, non-state actors [14]. Many of these rules as stated in international law revolve around the principles of peaceful coexistence, non-interference in the international affairs of States, respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity and the equality of States. States as the principal actor in international relations have a whole lot of interests to protect, but tensions which would ordinarily flow from these divergent interests have been partly mediated through the development of international values and ethics. According to Eze 2010, while there exists a body of rules and practices which influence how States order their affairs, each State tries to ensure that other states in relation, play by the rule. It is the totality of the systematic structures and patterns of these interactions within the international system that are the focus of international relations studies [15].

2. Materials and Methods

The research methodology adopted in this study is qualitative in nature, utilizing a descriptive and analytical approach to examine the international dimensions of Nigeria's 2023 General Elections. The study is based on secondary data sources, including official reports, academic literature, policy documents, and media analyses. This method allows for a comprehensive understanding of the impact of foreign actors, election observers, and international organizations on the electoral process in Nigeria. The study applies the theory of sovereignty as a guiding framework, emphasizing the principle of non-interference while also acknowledging the influence of international norms on democratic governance. Data were collected from reports issued by the United Nations, the European Union, the African Union, and other international organizations actively involved in monitoring the elections. Additionally, political analyses and historical perspectives were examined to contextualize the findings within Nigeria's evolving democratic landscape. The study's analytical process involved a critical assessment of how international engagement shaped both the perception and legitimacy of the elections while also identifying the limitations imposed by state sovereignty. The methodological approach ensures an objective assessment of the interactions between Nigeria and the international community, shedding light on the broader implications of international election observation on democratic processes.

3. Results

The 2023 General Election in Nigeria

As earlier stated, periodic election is one of the fundamental features of democracy, as was demonstrated in Nigeria in February and March 2023. The elections were held on 25 February to elect the President and Vice President and members of the Senate and House of Representatives. The elections marked 24 years of uninterrupted democracy; the longest span in Nigeria's history. The incumbent President, Muhammadu Buhari's tenor, elapsed, that produced a thickly political contest in Nigeria's electoral system since the end of military rule in 1999 .

Below is a breakdown of the political parties and their candidates in the election

Table 1 lists the political parties and their respective presidential candidates in Nigeria's 2023 election, covering 18 parties across the political spectrum.

Table 1. Political Parties and Presidential Candidates.

S/No	Party	Candidate
1	Accord (A)	Christopher Imumolen
2	Action Alliance (AA)	Hanza al-Mustapha
3	Action Democratic Party (ADP)	Yabangi Sani
4	Action People's Party (APP)	Osita Nnadi
5	African Action Congress (AAC)	Omoyele Sowere
6	African Democratic Congress (ADC)	Dumebi Kachikwu
7	All Progressive Congress (APC)	Bola Tinubu
8	All Progressive Grand Alliance (APGA)	Peter Umeadi
9	Allied People's Movement (AMP)	Princess Ojei
10	Boot Party (BP)	Sunday Adenuga
11	Labour Party (LP)	Peter Obi
12	National Rescue Movement (NRM)	Felix Osakwe
13	New Nigeria Peoples Party (NNPP)	Rabiu Kwankwaso
14	People's Redemption Party (PRP)	Kola Abiola
15	People's Democratic Party (PDP)	Atiku Abubakar
16	Social Democratic Party (SDP)	Adewole Adebayo
17	Young Progressive Party (YPP)	Malik Ado-Ibrahim
18	Zenith Labour Party (ZLP)	Dan Nwanyanwu

Source: Stears.co

The list above, give a picture Nigeria's political landscape. Only the APM presented a woman as candidate. Chris Imumolen of the (AP) is the youngest of all at age 38. The PDP and APC produced the oldest candidates of 75 and 70 respectively [11]. On educational qualification, five candidates have the minimum requirement of a school certificate, seven have bachelor level degrees, and five have masters degrees. Rabiu Kwankwaso of the NNPP is the only candidate with a doctorate degree. On political and public service experience of the candidate, Atiku Abubakar is the race's sole candidate of the office of the Vice President from 1999 – 2007: Bola Tinubu, Rabiu Kwankwaso and Peter Obi all served as Governors of Lagos, Kano and Anambra in two tenure service capacities. Four of the 18 candidates also chairs their party leadership. They include Sowere (AAC), Yabagi (ADP), Adenugu (BP) and Nwanyanwu (ZIP). Peter Umeadi (APGA) was a former Chief Judge of Anambra State, Adebayo of the SDP was a former Diplomat and AL-Mustapha of the (AA) was the Chief Security Officer to the former Head of State, Sani Abacha.

Nigeria's Political Culture and the 2023 General Election

Culture is generally acknowledged, as beliefs, arts, moral, law, custom and other traits and habits acquired by man as a member of a society. Culture can be seen as the total way of life of a people including the social values and legacy that an individual acquires from his society, Political culture can be seen in terms of cultural values and orientations of people that have relevance to politics. It is the commonly shared goals and commonly accepted rules of a political system. Pye, L, as enunciated by Babawole, 2015, see political culture as the set of attitudes, beliefs and sentiments which give order and meaning to a political process and provide the underlying assumptions and rules that govern behaviour in the political system. It is a system of empirical beliefs, expressive symbols and values which define the situation in which political action takes place. Political culture give order and meaning to the political process and provides the underlying assumptions and rules that govern behaviour in the political system.

In the light of the values, beliefs and emotions that give meaning to the political life of a people, we can situate Nigeria's political culture within the realm of sectionalism, ethnicity and religion as played out in the 2023 General Election in Nigeria. The history of Nigeria is best captured in ethnicity and religious biases which the ruling class have so

exploited that division and antagonism have continually defined the character of all relationships in the country right from the colonial era. The colonialist, pursued, propagated and enthroned a number of policies that prepared the ground for sectional conflict. The divide rule policies of the British colonialist pattern of development and urbanisation in West Africa resulted in ethnic, clan, regional and sectional consciousness and the consequent disunity among the peoples of the colonial Nigerian state. Political perspective of nationalism aggravate these sentiments, all in pursuit of political power. Party politics and electoral democracy in Nigeria have been characterised by ethnic based politics. From the first republics, through the second, third and fourth republics, many political parties have remained ethnic based and shapes the nature of Nigeria's politics.

Despite the national spread of the three frontline parties in the 2023 General Elections (APC, PDP and LP), Nigeria's over 350 ethnic groups that impacts on the nations decision-making processes and structure, still dictated the pace of the election in 2023. Prior to the 2023 General Elections, the issues trending in the political sphere was Hausa/Fulani handing over to Hausa/Fulani, Yoruba or Igbo as the next President, and the Muslim or Christian religion personalities, in place of choosing the credible candidate with score card of good governance. The Presidential election held on 25 February 2023 was won by Bola Tinubu of the APC who garnered 8,794,726 votes. Runners-up were former Vice President Atiku Abubakar of the PDP with 6,984,520 votes and Peter Obi of the LP who scored 6,101,533 alongside other presidential aspirants.

Assessment of the performance of all the candidates were squarely based on the religions, ethnic and sectional sentiments. The APC candidate Bola Tinubu and his Vice, Kashim Shetima are Muslims from the South and North respectively. The PDP of Atiku Abubakar, a Muslim from the North, had Ifeanyi Okowa, a Christian from the South as Vice President. The LP Presented Peter Obi, a Christian from the South, and Yusuf Datti Baba-Ahmed, a Muslim from the North as his running mate. The APC Muslim-Muslim ticket was seriously opposed. However, while the APC de-emphasis on religion in its candidate's choice, it desperately invoked religious sentiments in her campaigns as displayed in the alleged hiring of faked Bishops in the event to unveil his deputy. The PDP tried to maintain a secular posture by balancing regional, ethnic and religious sensitivities in its choices and circumspection in religiously sensitive issues. Atiku's deletion of his Twitter and Facebook posts that condemned the brutal killing of Deborah Samuel (a Christian, accused of blasphemy), upon threats by Islamic fundamentalists to withdraw their support for him, demonstrated Atiku's disposition on the importance of religion in the contest and the need to harness it. Nevertheless, PDP's choice of a Fulani Muslims as a prospective replacement for the incumbent who shares the same identity also kindled the religious and ethnic sentiments. The LP was also faulted on its candidate, Peter Obi's publicised constant visits to Christian congregations, and labelled a crusade mobilizer and Christian candidate; a ploy to reduce his Muslim support base.

The outcome of the 2023 Presidential election reflected ethno-religious sentiments and disposition as the leading Presidential candidates secured more votes from their ethnic and religious groups. See table below.

Table 2 presents the distribution of votes among four major political parties—APC, PDP, LP, and NNPP—across Nigerian states during the 2023 presidential election, highlighting ethno-religious patterns in voter preferences.

Table 2. Ethno-religious Interest in the 2023 Presidential Election in Nigeria.

S/n	STATES	APC	PDP	LP	NNPP
1	Ekiti	201,494	89,554	11,397	264
2	Osun	343,945	354,366	23,283	713
3	Kwara	263,572	136,909	31,116	3,141
4	Undo	369,924	115,463	4,405	930
5	Ogun	341,554	123,831	85, 829	2,200
6	Oyo	449,884	123,831	99,110	4,095
7	Enugu	4,772	15,749	428,640	1,808
8	Lagos	572,606	75,750	582,454	8442
9	Gombe	146,977	319,123	26,160	10,520
10	Jigawa	421,390	386,587	1,889	98,234
11	Adamawa	182,881	417,611	105,648	8,006
12	Katsina	482,283	489,045	6,376	69,386
13	Nasarawa	172,992	489,045	191,361	12,715
14	Niger	375,183	284,898	80,452	21,836
15	Benue	310,468	130,081	308,372	4,740
16	Federal capital territory (fct) abuja	90,902	74,194	281,717	4,517
17	Akwa ibom	160,620	214,012	132,683	7,796
18	Edo	144,471	89,585	331,163	2,743
19	Abia	8,914	22,676	327,095	1,239
20	Kogi	240,751	145,104	56,217	4,238
21	Bauchi	316,694	426,607	27,373	72,103
22	Plateau	307,195	243,808	466,272	8,869
23	Bayelsa	42,572	68,818	49,975	540
24	Kadu'na	399,293	554,360	294,494	92,969
25	Kebbi	248,088	285,175	10,682	5,038
26	Kano	517,341	131,716	28,513	997,279
27	Zamfara	298,396	193,978	1,660	4044
28	Sokoto	285,444	288,679	6,568	1,300
29	Cross river	130,520	95,425	179,917	1,644
30	Delta	90,183	161,600	341,866	3,122
31	Ebonyi	42,402	13,503	259,738	1,661
32	Anambra	5,111	9,036	584,621	1,967
33	Taraba	135,165	189,017	146,315	12,818
34	Borno	252,282	90,921	7,205	4,626
35	Rivers	231,591	88,468	175,071	1,322
36	Imo	66,406	30,234	360,495	1,552
37	Yobe	151,459	198,567	2,406	18,270
	Total	8,794,726	6,984,520.	6,101,533	1,496,687

Source: INEC (2023)

From the table, we can see that LP candidate, Obi, won in all the states in the Eastern region, his ethnic Base. The PDP won massively in the Northeast and Northwest region, his ethnic base, as a Fulani man; the APC garnered more votes in his Yorubal ethnic base. On the religions influence, we can see from the table, the LP candidate got more votes in Christian dominated states and areas, like the federal capital territory (Abuja), Nasarawa and Plateau States. The

APC and PDP candidates as Muslims won more votes in Muslim dominated states like Kogi, Niger, Kano and Katsina etc.

4. Discussion

The International Dynamics in the 2023 General Elections

The international connection to the 2023 General Elections will analyse the various foreign Actors and forces that participated directly and indirectly in the elections. It must be noted, that European powers have adopted several measures to enhance the spread of democracy through subtle interventions such as aids, assistance and trade policies. In Nigeria, the Independent Electoral Commission (INEC) has steadily been given assistance by the European Union and the United States, hence their visible presence as international observers and independent monitors. Their presence is also evident in elections held in several other African States as they get well involved in the meetings of the African Union and in disarmament projects, because conflicts in the States would threaten the budding democratic governments in the continent and the spread of their values (Chukwu & Briggs 2019). The International foundation for electoral systems (IFES) headquartered in the United States is one of the agencies in advancing democracy. They collaborate with civil society, public institutions and the private sectors to build resilient democracies.

Their work is reflected through their technical assistance and applied research focused, on elections, government transparency, corruption and innovative ways in technology and data, all to impact on elections successes. IFES also supports women to increase their voices in democratic processes. Nigeria is one of the over one hundred countries where IFES works. Other States include; Albania, Belarus, Bosnia, Bulgaria, Ecuador, Ethiopia, Kenya Libya, Romania etc. (Global democracy coalition.org). IFES technical assistance in the 2023 General Elections was in the training of Electoral personnel and enlightenment programmes on the elections, all over the states in Nigeria. IFES efforts are geared towards enhanced relationships in the international system.

There were also several international observers that played active role in the 2023 General Elections. This is because Election observation has become an integral part of contemporary representative democracy. Election observation is a process of collecting, organising and analysing election related data, by non-partisan state and non-state actors, to draw up objective conclusive reports in assessing the overall election cycle. The United Nations, in 2005 adopted the Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation and Code of Conduct for International Election observers. Amongst all that constitute the ethnics and responsibility of Election observers, include the following.

The interest of the international community in the achievement of democratic elections as part of democratic development include:

1. Respect for human rights and the rule of law.
2. Respect for sovereignty and international human rights.
3. Respect for the laws of the State and the authority of the Electoral Bodies
4. Respect the integrity of their mission
5. Maintenance of strict political impartiality at all times.
6. Non obstruction of election processes.

Some of the International Election observers in the 2023 General Election include the African Union Election Observers, the International Republic Institute (IRI), the National Democratic Institute NDI, the European Union Election Observer Mission (EUEOM) The IRI and NDI had about forty delegates with members from 20 countries. All the observers had to exhibit professional ethics on laid down election standards. There are International and Regional election standards also that have been so adopted. In Africa, we have the AU African charter on Democratic Elections and Governance, as well as the ECOWAS Protocols on Democracy and Good Governance. Provisions in all these Charters and Protocols, basically border on the respect of sovereignty and non-interference as some of the guiding principles of international relations.

The theory and concept of sovereignty is the thriving force in the international dimensions of the 2023 General Elections in Nigeria. Nigeria as a sovereign State, like all other States have her internal challenges. The examination of the political environment in Nigeria obviously shows the religious, ethnic and sectional forces on display in the 2023

General Elections, which the international Election Observers will not properly comprehend. These peculiar domestic realities no doubt would have influenced strange dynamics in the election, but respect for sovereignty and non-interference is placed as a vital check on the International Observers role.

5. Conclusion

International relations is all about the various interactions in the international system that host several Actors, with States as principal Actors. It is for the enhancements of relationships that elections conducted in promotion of democracy all over the world attracts international attention. The peculiar environmental exigencies of the various States breeds various reactions. According to Chukwu and Briggs 2019, the social environment, economic resources, natural endowments and the political terrain of States decide the extent to which democratic principles and tenets are upheld, observed, protected, promoted and enhanced. The political culture of a State give order and meaning to the political process and provides the underlying assumptions and rules that govern behaviour in the political system. Sectionalism, ethnicity and religion that dominate the political landscape of Nigeria played out in its fullest in the 2023 presidential elections in Nigeria that spilled out into the international perception that greeted the election. While the International Observers in the election played by the rule to enhance International co-operations, the other unofficial participants played into the rubrics of sentiments generated by the forces of sectionalism, ethnicity and religion. Notwithstanding, the 2023 General Elections in Nigeria consolidated Nigeria's standing in the comity of Nations.

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