

Elite Capture, Institutional Performance and the 2015 National Electoral Outcomes in Nigeria

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Abstract

A major concern of all stakeholders from the differentiated political spectrum in Nigeria has been the production and distribution of Permanent Voters Cards (PVCs). A strategic error was made by INEC in the production and distribution of the PVCs as many voters did not vote in the 2015 national elections on account of their non-possession of the cards. The production and the distribution commenced late but specifically, the distribution was first designed to be at the ward and later local government levels which posed severe challenge for voters to collect their cards at these levels. Voters are used to collecting their voter's cards at the polling units where registration normally takes place. INEC statistics shows that 56,431,255 cards representing 81.98% of registered voters were distributed, but a large percentage of these cards did not get to the actual owners. There was an elite capture of the distribution process which ultimately affected the performance of INEC in reaching the electorates with their only instrument of electoral mandate. Some of the PVCs were hidden, diverted and sold and these transactions with political and economic motives were perpetrated by political elites within and outside INEC. We argue that when state institutions make strategic errors in programming either as a result of pressure from vested interests, or unforeseen situations, they (i) create avenues for elite capture and in this case, the capture of the distribution function and this adversely affected the effectiveness of INEC and therefore the quality of electoral outcomes in the country (ii) these institutions are bound to incur huge losses including higher transaction cost in rectifying the errors and block areas of elite capture. Early institutional programming is needed to ensure Continuous Voter Registration and the production of electoral materials. A reform is needed to strengthen the independence of INEC thereby weakening future elite resolve at capturing such processes; and a revisiting of the production of new PVCs to ensure that all illegible voters possess their PVCs. This will ensure the protection of electoral mandates and the strengthening of democracy.

Key words: Political Capture, Institutional Performance, Independent National Electoral Commission, Electoral Outcome

I Introduction

A major challenge of the 2015 elections was the production and distribution of Permanent Voters Cards (PVCs) and it remained a concern of voters, politicians and political parties from the differentiated political spectrum in Nigeria. INEC committed a strategic error in programming as well as project execution in the production and distribution of the PVCs and this implied that many voters did not vote in the just concluded national elections on account of their non-possession of PVCs. Apart from the late production, the distribution was full of challenges. The process was initially designed to commence at the ward level, ended after few days due what INEC considered to be high cost of distribution. The process was later transferred to the local government and state levels. These locations posed severe challenge for voters who could not reach them to collect their cards. Voters are used to collecting their voter's cards at the polling units where registration normally takes place. INEC statistics shows that 56,431,255 cards representing 81.98% of registered voters were distributed, but a large percentage of these cards did not get to the actual owners. There was an elite capture of the distribution process which ultimately affected the performance of INEC in reaching the electorates with their only instrument of electoral mandate. Some of the PVCs were hidden, diverted and sold and these transactions with political and economic motives were perpetrated by political elites within and outside INEC. We argue that the elite capture of this distribution function of INEC adversely affected the effectiveness of INEC and therefore the quality of electoral outcomes in the country as many anomalies were witnessed. What is elite capture? How does it affect INEC's performance in the discharge of its electoral functions?

Elite capture is different from state capture. State capture is used to explain the efforts of a small number of firms (or such groups as the military, ethnic groups and kleptocratic politicians) to shape the rules of the game to their advantage through illicit, non-transparent provision of private gains to public officials. It includes private purchase of legislative votes, executive decrees,

court decisions and illicit political party funding. State capture links the problem of corruption with vested economic, social and political interests. (Hellman, Joel S, Jones, Geraint, Kaufmann, Daniel, 2000; Kaufmann, Daniel (2002).

Elite capture describes a situation where resources meant for the benefit of a wider population are appropriated by a few individuals who occupy economic, political educational, ethnic positions. They take advantage of government programs aimed at distributing resources or funds to the general public by using their influence to direct such assistance in such a way that it primarily benefits the elite group. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elite_capture) We therefore use elite capture to explain a situation where political parties, politicians, bureaucrats, and other interested parties across political divide takeover processes which state institutions have put in place for the delivery of results. The takeover could either be in deliberate connivance with state elites or due to errors in the processes of delivery of such services.

Institutional performance is used to describe the effectiveness and efficiency of government agencies in the fulfillment of constitutional and administrative responsibilities. Despite the efforts and commitment of agency leadership at ensuring the success of its institution, several factors could obstruct the achievement of these goals: (1) errors in the decision and policy making processes; and (2) entrenched interests: economic or political interests. Agency performance determines for instance electoral outcomes in case of an electoral management body. Electoral outcomes are results that produce patterns and these patterns often tell stories of election turn-out, the reason for the turnout results etc. The dialectical connection of these variables explains the fact that when political and economic elites capture institutional processes, this changes the direction of policy and programming in an institution or it affects directly the performance of the institution in the discharge of its plan or its program.

The data generated for this paper has been obtained from newspapers, websites of INEC and other relevant organizations, key informant personal interviews and personal observations as an election monitor of all the phases of the 2015 elections. Our interpretation of the data was based on theoretical understanding of elite capture and electoral turnout.

II INEC and the production and the distribution of PVC

Did INEC commence the production of PVCs behind schedule? The procurement procedure is usually lengthy. For instance it requires 42 days from inception of the articulation of the proposal to the delivery of a service. This period for the Nigerian public service is unthinkable because of the bureaucratic bottlenecks in the procurement line. What we do know is that the production of the PVCs was to be delivered within 7 seven months from the date of signing the contract.

The information in the public domain reveals that the production of PVCs was handled by a single contractor who further subcontracted the production to another single company. The THISDAY, a Nigerian daily reported that:

As the controversy continues to trail the production and supply of the permanent voters' cards (PVCs) for the elections, it has emerged that a Nigerian company, ACT.Technologies Limited, was awarded a N2.6 billion contract by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) to produce the PVCs, which was in turn sub-contracted to a Chinese firm.....Based on the electronic payments exclusively obtained from INEC, the transfers showed that over N2.6 billion was paid to the Nigerian company for the production and supply of over 68.8 million PVCs within a period of seven months.

<http://www.thisdaylive.com/articles/revealed-how-inec-paid-act-technologies-n2-6bn-for-production-of-pvcs/203993/>

Why was a single contractor given an assignment of this magnitude? Where background checks done on performance pedigree of this Nigerian company before the award of the contract? Why didn't INEC deal directly with the Chinese manufacturer? Clearly, the production of PVCS handled by the single contractor and a single firm did not contemplate the enormity of the assignment. The Chinese company apparently had limited capacity and had to try to expand its production layout several times in order to respond to the mounting pressure for PVCs. That explains why as at 11th March, the date of

the first election, PVCs hadn't been produced. On the rescheduled date of election, the PVCs were yet to be produced for many voters.

There are indications that vested interests were at play within INEC and outside INEC which influenced processes leading to the selection of the contractor and the eventual award of the contract? We do not have contract data to substantiate this claim, but it is instructive to note that these interests cannot be wished away. The import of this point is that where there are competing interests in the policy or decision making arena, such hiccups are prevalent.

The delay in the production of cards led to the variations in the production and distribution of PVCs and it became a subject of contestations, protest, and litigation. The table below shows that variation in the distribution of PVCs by the INEC as at March 2015.

INDEPENDENT NATIONAL ELECTORAL COMMISSION				
DISTRIBUTION OF PERMANENT VOTERS CARDS AS AT March 6, 2015			VOTERS CARDS AS AT 21-Mar-15	Remarks
S/N	States	Number of Registered Voters	Number of Cards Collected by Voters	% of Cards Collected by Voters
(a)	(b)	(c)	(d)	(e)
1	Abia	1,396,162	1,183,127	84.74
2	Adamawa	1,559,012	1,381,571	88.62
3	Akwa-Ibom	1,680,759	1,587,566	94.46
4	Anambra	1,963,173	1,658,967	84.50
5	Bauchi	2,054,125	1,967,081	95.76
6	Bayelsa	610,373	548,585	89.88
7	Benue	2,015,452	1,607,800	79.77
8	Borno	1,934,079	1,407,777	72.79
9	Cross River	1,175,623	983,968	83.70
10	Delta	2,275,264	1,939,952	85.26
11	Ebonyi	1,074,273	848,392	78.97
12	Edo	1,779,738	1,230,566	68.81

13	Ekiti	732,021	522,107	71.32
14	Enugu	1,429,221	1,223,606	85.61
15	Fct	881,472	569,109	64.56
16	Gombe	1,120,023	1,070,725	95.60
17	Imo	1,803,030	1,707,449	94.70
18	Jigawa	1,831,276	1,757,658	95.98
19	Kaduna	3,407,222	3,174,519	93.17
20	Kano	4,975,701	4,112,039	82.64
21	Katsina	2,827,943	2,620,096	92.65
22	Kebbi	1,470,648	1,372,630	93.34
23	Kogi	1,350,883	926,013	68.55
24	Kwara	1,142,267	889,067	77.83
25	Lagos	5,822,207	3,799,274	65.25
26	Nasarawa	1,242,667	1,048,053	84.34
27	Niger	2,014,317	1,682,058	83.51
28	Ogun	1,829,534	1,125,657	61.53
29	Ondo	1,524,655	1,118,479	73.36
30	Osun	1,407,107	1,033,229	73.43
31	Oyo	2,415,566	1,639,967	67.89
32	Plateau	2,001,825	1,508,585	75.36
33	Rivers	2,537,590	2,127,837	83.85
34	Sokoto	1,611,929	1,527,004	94.73
35	Taraba	1,340,652	1,270,889	94.80
36	Yobe	1,099,970	824,401	74.95
37	Zamfara	1,495,717	1,435,452	95.97
	Total	68,833,476	56,431,255	81.98

Source: INEC May 2015

The table reveals that 12,402,221 registered voters did not receive their PVCs on account of non-production or production failure. What we do not know is the actual number of persons who did not receive the **56,431,255** PVCs. What we do know is that a large percentage of these cards did not get to the actual owners because a variety of reasons which we described as the capturing of the process by elites.

INEC explained its inability to distribute the PVCs at the polling unit or ward level because of lack of funds. It is surprising that INEC holds funding as a problem of the distribution of PVCs. Its chief spokes person wrote:

Clearly and categorically, it is not true that financial constraint are the reason for the poor distribution of the Permanent Voter Cards....As regards the issue of timing, it is a function of the budget. We have certain number of days at the polling unit level. It does not make economic sense to spend endless days at the polling units. All over the country, we are using about 350,000 people, paying them about N2bn per day. How can that be budgeted for? We don't have the luxury of shedding off that kind of money for many days because we also have to look at the big picture. Many people are looking at the microscopic picture. For how long can we pay N2bn per day? That is why we said we would spend three days for the exercise. It is good to have a model that will save costs. That is why we said we are distributing the cards at the local government offices. We cannot keep these workers at the polling units for days because we cannot keep spending billions of naira every day. It simply cannot be budgeted for, it doesn't make sense. We do not see any possibility that the election would not hold because of lack of funding. We should be optimistic that the elections would come and go without any hitches. The economic condition will not affect the election process, since the will is there.” (<http://www.punchng.com/news/six-weeks-to-election-fg-yet-to-approve-n75bn-inec-budget/>)

To ensure that INEC conserve funds, it redirected the distribution of PVCs at the local government instead of polling unit or ward level. But after tremendous pressure from the public, it changed its strategy from local to the ward level. The Chief Press Secretary to INEC Chairman, Mr. Kayode Robert Idowu wrote that:

The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) has ordered the decentralisation of on-going distribution of Permanent Voter Cards (PVCs) to Ward levels, in order to enhance access by persons yet to collect their cards. Before now, the distribution was done at the local government offices of the Commission since the end of distribution at the polling unit level. But distribution of the PVCs will henceforth be at Ward level nationwide. <http://inecnigeria.org/?inecnews=inec-decentralises-pvc-distribution>

From observations, the distribution of cards up till the March 2015 election was done at the local government level. This explains why the electorate

bombarded INEC local government offices for collection of the Cards. In some situations, chairmen, councilors and political party officials were used in the distribution process.

III Elite capture of PVCs

The central argument of the paper is that there was an elite capture of the distribution process and this was done for political and economic motives and the transactions were undertaken by political elites within and outside INEC. The economic transactions were purely commercial in nature where the seller of the PVCs was interested in making money from the desperate politicians and bureaucrats with political ambitions. Those who made money from the sales of the PVCs were commission agents and INEC staff and security agents as will be discussed below.

The political motive was both for the acquisition and retention of political power which the dominant political class has been known to cherish. Their rent-seeking and rent-collection behaviour makes them desperate to capture state power and control the state apparatus. We agree with the view that:

These days, many politicians seek power with the aim of promoting primitive accumulation. Politics is now seen as a vehicle for making quick and easy money. This rent-seeking and rent collection mentality of politicians can be seen from the desperation of incumbents to hold on to power by any means. The counter weight to this is the determination and the desperation of the elites outside to get into power by any means necessary. To these elites, the end result of getting control of political power is justified by whatever means is employed. This means include violence". (LEMT, 2003: 89)

The other side of this point is the violent nature of competitive politics arising from the desperate need to control the state apparatus in order to preside over "who gets what, when and how" at regional, state and individual levels. This arrangement has continued to influence politics in the country, particularly the patron-client relations.

With respect to the PVCs, the elites stole, diverted and even purchased them to prevent either the ruling or opposition party from gaining votes from the polling units or wards where the ruling or opposition party had traditionally strong electoral support. In this situation, there were voters whose names may in the voter register, but didn't possess PVCs. The PVCs were either hidden or never used or used during the elections or destroyed by those who eventually possess them. We tried to provide insights into how the elite organized their seizure of the distribution process of the PVCs from INEC using interviews and newspaper reports.

Cases of diverted PVCs

There were cases of both deliberate and mistaken diversion of PVCs from the rightful ward to some other ward. We can excuse the error by INEC staff for taking PVC meant for wards to other wards. But we note that the deliberate diversion was meant to deny the voters the right to perform their civic duty in addition to denying the political parties votes.

In Akwa Ibom, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) was reported to have said that hoodlums carted away with 5,955 Permanent Voters Cards (PVC) (<http://www.pmnewsnigeria.com/2015/01/13/Hoodlums-cart-away-5-955-PVCs-in-Akwa-Ibom/>) In Sokoto State, the State Comptroller of Immigration Service, Mr. Yunusa Aliyu, told newsmen that 66 PVCs, 33 temporary voter cards, 271 old and 69 new national identity cards a local government identification card and 12 birth certificates were among the seized documents from unauthorised persons by officers attached to Tureta checkpoint on the Sokoto-Gusau road, around the border area with the Republic of Niger. He revealed that the documents were being taken to Niger. (<http://uncova.com/nigeria-immigration-seizes-452-pvcs-id-cards-others-from-niger-republic-nationals>)

Cases of sold PVCs

There were situations where INEC staff sold PVCs through Commission agents. A politician explained to me in an interview that he was approached by someone whom he described as a commission agent and advertised to him PVCs for sale. The agent informed him that the PVCs were original copies from INEC in a State in the North Central geopolitical zone of the country. On why he was chosen as a possible buyer, the commission agent explained that the PVCs were for voters in a ward he felt were opposed to his (proposed buyer's) party. He tried to convince him to accept the fact that the idea of buying the PVCs was to deny the voters in those wards from voting their preferred candidate and to weaken the opposition as well. He said he actually bought the PVCs which he never used for the purpose of the elections. (Interview, 3rd March 2015)

Cases of bribery in the distribution of PVCs

INEC staff demanded for bribes before the release of PVCs from Chairmen and councilors who were desperate. Security personnel in INEC office demanded for bribes before identified PVCs can be taken outside the premises of INEC offices. A Councilor and a politician in a State in the North Central geopolitical zone revealed that when he was pressurized by the electorates in their wards to ensure that their PVCs are brought to them before the elections. The councilor informed me that they were conscious of the enormous damage the non-possession of the PVC could cause to their party and ambition of the candidates and so they had to approach the INEC office. The councilors informed me that when he visited the INEC Local Government Area office to check the PVCs for his ward and the neighboring ward, they were requested to deposit an amount before they could be allowed to sort their PVCs. During the first attempt, he couldn't mobilize the deposit. He eventually gave the money and the sorting was allowed. While they were to take the PVCs with them to their wards the security men at the gate of the INEC office stopped them from taking the PVCs with them until they deposited an amount of money. They were able to give the money and they took away the PVCs. (interview with Councilor

Mr. M.P.R) The implication of this is that the demand and the supply of bribes before PVCs were taken possession of by owners indeed is worrisome because persons who couldn't supply bribes couldn't obtain PVCs for members of their communities and therefore they were disenfranchised. (Interview, 3rd March 2015)

In a similar vein, voters were charged money before taking possession of their cards, while politicians at the local government level demanded for PVCs as a precondition for the payment of salaries. It is reported that:

Hope of the people of Imo State to elect their preferred candidates in the rescheduled 2015 general elections may have been dashed. This followed the reports around the state that officials of the Independent National Electoral Commission are charging prospective voters between N2, 000 and N3, 000 issuance of their Permanent Voter's Cards (PVCs). Since the postponement of the election by the commission as a result of the insecurity and inadequate distribution of the PVCs, there has been an upsurge in the number of people seeking to collect their PVCs in various local government headquarters, wards and polling units across the state. This came as most employers in the state demanded the cards as a prerequisite for payment of January and February salaries to their employees. (Damian Duruiheoma, Owerri, February 14, 2015)

These cases show the extent to which each layer in the administrative and political setup in the distribution of PVCs seized the opportunity to make political and economic gains from the process through extortion.

IV PVCs and the Electoral Quality and Outcomes

The political capture of the PVCs had many implications for the democratic process in Nigeria. INEC had hopes of high performance and this is reflected in the Chairman's comments. Professor Jega was reported to have informed the Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for West and Central Africa, Dr. Mohammed Ibn Chambas that:

The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) will spare no effort to ensure that every validly registered voter get his / her Permanent Voter Card (PVC) to be able to exercise their franchise

in the 2015 General Election.... the Commission had reached a comfort level to boldly say the forthcoming general election will be free, fair, credible and transparent, and will be of far higher standard than what was achieved in 2011. the challenges experienced during the third phase of PVC distribution and Continuous Voter Registration (CVR) in some states were transient and do not threaten the Commission’s readiness to deliver superlative elections in 2015.

(<http://www.inecnigeria.org/?inecnews=every-validly-registered-voter-will-get-pvc-inec-chair>)

This ambition of INEC in presenting every registered voter with his/her PVC was not achieved. Secondly, the description of the challenges associated with the production and distribution of PVCs as “transient and do not threaten the Commission’s readiness to deliver superlative elections in 2015” as a poor calculation of the enormity of the impact of the challenge to the democratic process. In any case, we suggest that the PVC problematic has many implications.

1. Elite capture of PVCs led to disenfranchisement which was manifested in poor voter turnout at Presidential and gubernatorial elections. The table reveals that less than 43.65% of registered citizens voted in the presidential election due to a variety of challenges, including the non-possession of PVCs by potential voters.

Results for 2015 Presidential General Elections

No. of Valid Votes	28,587,564
No. of Rejected Votes	844,519
No. of Votes Cast	29,432,083
No. of Accredited Voters	31,746,490
No. of Registered Voters	67,422,005

Source: INEC website, <http://www.inecnigerian.com>

The post-election commentaries have tried to compare the turnout during the Presidential and gubernatorial elections and concluded that the turnout in the former is higher than the later. But the reasons for this situation have not been vividly explained. It is clear that Nigerians were heavily mobilized for the presidential elections as politicians instructed their supporters with or without

PVCs to present themselves to their polling units. There was therefore large presence of voters who were not allowed to vote. In addition, the poor performance of the electronic card readers led to heavy traffic in the units which gave the impression of large turnout. The point to be made here is that the large presence of Nigerians at polling units did not translate to large electoral turnout as can be seen from the table.

Secondly, in the gubernatorial elections, INEC insisted that only holders of PVCs were to be attended to. In addition, the frustrated electorate withdrew because they had no PVCs and or the card readers were likely going to consume their time and they became politically apathetic. The collapse of the electronic card reader machine led political elites to use captured PVCs to thumb-print ballot papers either in their homes or in the polling units.

2. Elite capture arising from the poor institutional weakness, led to waste of state resources which can take the form of high transaction costs. Transaction costs are all the costs involved in human interaction over time. (what is transaction cost?) Because of the absence of the exact data on the number of PVCs traded, hidden, stolen, we will use the number of accredited voters in the 2015 Presidential elections as the hypothetically number of PVCs available to voters. The number of accredited voters during this particular election is 31,746,490. We therefore assume hypothetically as well that 35,675,515 were voters without PVCs and cannot be traced.

We hypothesized that there will be increase in the transaction cost on PVC production. We reported above that INEC budgeted and expended N2.6bn to produce PVCs for the 2015 elections. It is pretty difficult to know the number of Nigerian who did not receive their PVCs. This implies that before elections of states and local governments that will be conducted before the 2019 elections, voters without PVCs have to be provided with them Extra cost much be incurred in the production of new PVCs for these categories of voters. In addition, there will be increase transaction cost of PVC distribution: INEC will

require about 50% of the total cost of the N2bn PVC production or more (due to fall in exchange rate) to produce the PVCs at ward levels to those citizens who never received them because of INEC's cost saving measures or elite capture discussed above.

3. Litigation

It is on record that one governor approached the courts to compel the INEC to make available the PVCs for the voters in his State. The governor of Plateau State, Jonah David Jang was reported to have said that he has dragged the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) to court over skewed distribution of (PVCs) to his state:

If these elections were held on the 14th of February, can we sincerely say INEC was ready? There are several areas in Plateau State that have not received their PVC; not that these PVCs are in Abuja, but based on what I have been told, they have not been printed.... What is the guarantee that these PVCs would get to Nigeria before 8th of March deadline for collection? Honestly, we appreciated Professor Attahiru Jega when he conducted the 2011 elections, but whether some people are sabotaging him and he is not aware of this, only God in heaven know...I have even gone to court to allow usage of Temporary Voter Card; INEC should allow this because they cannot deprive my people of voting; it is not their fault that the commission did not print their cards. We used this temporary voter cards for 2011 elections, we have used them for by-elections and local government elections here in Plateau State without any problem. So I am advocating for its use if by March 8th my people have not receive their PVC. I am going to make an announcement that anybody with Temporary Voters Card should go to polling units and vote". <http://www.thisdaylive.com/articles/jang-drags-inec-to-court-over-skewed-distribution-of-pvcs/202953/>

Although the courts did not give judgment for against INEC as well as approve the use of TVCs, the statement produced an outcome. Voters without PVCs appeared at the polling units and protested against exclusion in the electoral process and in some areas, the protest disrupted the polling exercise.

4. Violent Protest

The poor distribution of PVCs elicited numerous protests and they took the form of petition, mass visit to INEC office, confrontation with the security

personnel etc. It was reported by Guardian news that the Independent National Electoral Commission in Lagos was petitioned over alleged deliberate mismanagement of Permanent Voter Cards (PVCs) distribution across five Local Government Areas in Lagos state, resulting in the alleged disenfranchisement of prospective voters in 24 wards. The Guardian news also reported that there was chaos in Ogbomoso area of Oyo State, when residents apprehended and arrested some persons for allegedly possessing over 500 PVCs. The intervention of policemen saved the suspects from being lynched by the enraged inhabitants by firing tear gas canisters to disperse the surging crowd.

The Guardian newspaper reported the Benin office of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) was besieged by hundreds of youths from Egor/Ikpobha Federal constituencies, as the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) House of Representatives candidate in the area, Johnson Agbonayinma, who led the protesters alleged compromise by some officials of the Commission, and that many of them including him, were yet to get their Permanent Voters Cards, barely two weeks to the election. (<http://www.ngrguardiannews.com/2015/03/pvcs-protesters-storm-inec-office/>)

On 17th March 2015, there was a protest organised by the Coalition of Concerned Nigerians (CCN) members, in Lagos led by OPC leader, Chief Gani Adams, distributed flyers, in which they advanced seven reasons the INEC chairman must go. They argued that over five million people in the southwest region were on the verge of being disenfranchised by the commission as they were yet to obtain their Permanent Voters Card (PVCs). They also alleged that over 2.5 million voters in the South-South and some two million in South-East faced the same predicament. The group wondered why PVC distribution was more in the North. (<http://theunion.com.ng/news/lagos-grounded-over-jega/>)

It is important to mention that we are not in agreement with correctness of the protester's claims, but the import of their protests is to show that there were

problems with the process of distributing PVCs. Protests of this nature have the tendency of making citizens have distrust for state institutions, as well as introducing rancorous intergroup and inter-party relations. These are clear setbacks to democratic developments

V Conclusions and recommendation

The lesson learned from the 2015 elections are that (i) when state institutions make strategic errors in programming either as a result of pressure from vested interests, or as a result of unforeseen situations, they (i) create avenues for elite capture and in this case, the capture of the distributive function of INEC, and this adversely affected the quality of electoral outcomes in the country as many anomalies were witnessed. (ii) these institutions are bound to incur huge losses including higher transaction cost in rectifying the errors and blocking areas of elite capture. (iii) the quality of electoral outcomes is poor prompting the electorate to either resort to violence or withdraw and become apathetic.

Base on the findings of the reflection, we recommend that:

(a) early institutional programming is needed to ensure Continuous Voter Registration and the production of electoral materials in line with the Electoral Act. This programming should take into consideration the procurement time frames.

(b) A reform is needed to strengthen the independence of INEC thereby weakening future elite resolve at capturing such processes. This will entail weakening the interests at play within INEC particularly the hegemonic influence of Electoral commissioners in decision making; (i) appointment of INEC chairman and his commissioners as recommended by Uwais Report on electoral reforms.

(c) revisiting of the production of new PVCs to ensure that all illegible voters possess their PVCs. This will ensure that citizens protection of electoral mandates and the strengthening of democracy.

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