

## **ELECTION OBSERVATION AND QUEST FOR ELECTION INTEGRITY IN NIGERIA**

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### **Abstract**

The international community and domestic stakeholders have invested lots of resources in strengthening democratic governance in Nigeria. The investments are driven by the understanding that democracy is a vital component of human development. A major aspect of this investment is on strengthening electoral integrity. Prospecting for electoral integrity in new democracies is essential because popular elections are frequently challenged by fraud and irregularities, which affect public confidence in democracy and regime legitimacy. For this reason, international standards for conduct of elections are developed, monitored and observed, to deter frauds that compromise free and fair elections. The election observation is one of the strategies designed to maintain standards that promote electoral integrity. In this concern is the effectiveness of the deterrent effect of Election Observation in Nigeria. Drawing from this track, we examine the concept of deterrence in relation to the role of election observers in 2015 general election and to determine the deterrent effects of election observation on Nigerians and governments of Nigeria. On this perspective, we ask; do international and domestic election observers deter electoral fraud in Nigeria? The paper argues that there is insignificant deterrent effect of election observation on Nigerians due to little or no implementation of recommendation of accredited observers as well as lack of legal backing to present it reports as evidence in tribunals. The study maintains that electoral integrity is possible in Nigeria if the Election management body, that is, Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) and government of Federal republic of Nigeria must take action to grant more powers and responsibility that can make observatory role more effective to deter the vices of elections in Nigeria.

**Keywords:** Election observation. Election Integrity. Democratic governance