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# Democracy, political participation and good governance in Nigeria

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## Abstract

The practice of democracy in Nigeria over a decade ago has not yielded much needed good governance. This is because democracy is practiced in such a way that responsible and competent people are scared away. Scholars and keen observers have attempted at unraveling the factors militating against translating democracy into good governance. The paper revealed that democratisation in Nigeria is pervaded by electoral violence, manipulation of election results and political participation constraints. These identified challenges have made it impossible to attain consolidated democracy that can, in turn, facilitate good governance. Democracy is a catalyst for accountability, transparency and responsive government which brings about good governance. The paper insisted that governance collapse in Nigeria is reflexive of the perfunctory role of the political actors and it adopted elite theory to reinforce this argument. The paper adopted content analysis as a means of data gathering. It dwelt extensively on the synergy between democracy, political participation and good governance but queried the artificial gulf between them in Nigeria. It concluded by putting forth viable and pragmatic way forward.

**Keywords:** Democratisation, Governance, Illegitimacy, Manipulation, Political Actors

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## 1. Introduction

The Nigerian state assumed a new governance status in 1999 following the demise of authoritarian regime in the country. Military dictatorship was replaced by representative democracy with the hopes and aspirations of good governance much higher than what the seemingly collapsible democratic institutions could fulfil. The source and nature of transition in 1999 was later found to constitute threat to the foundation of democracy and obliterates the current efforts at consolidating democracy.

The reality of the attempts to subvert the concept of democracy to serve the interests of a few, rather than a greater majority, still looms high. The emerging democracy was artificial and reflexive of external imposition. It is a weak democracy that repudiates inalienable ethos of its true identity. Democracy and political participation are related to good governance are interrelated and complementary but appear to be antithetical in Nigeria. Democracy in Nigeria is alien and its practice has proved difficult.

The erosion of good governance by the practice of democracy has deepened the crisis of democracy. When democracy is abused, good governance becomes elusive and evasive. This is what Darl (1989) describes as “virtual democracy”, democracy that shares resemblance with true democracy but lacks basic tenets of democracy. Democracy in Nigeria has three unique features which include: insulation of economic matters from popular participation, manipulation and monopolisation of democratic process including the use of violence and electoral fraud to secure legitimacy and peripheral participation of citizens. Surface-level participation does not have far-reaching influence on the outcome of policy choices.

According to Oke (2010) democracy involves the opportunity to participate in decision making in the political process. It repudiates arbitrariness and authoritarianism. It extols the consent of the governed and it protects human personality and values (Ake, 1991). Democracy, whether liberal, African or modern, includes equal opportunity for all, fundamental recognition of popular sovereignty, representativeness, majority rule, minority rights, popular consultation, right of choice between alternative programmes, consensus on fundamental issues, as well as essentially periodic elections (Oke, 2005). The concept of democracy confers the opportunity to participate in decision making by all.

Democracy here goes beyond opportunity of election. Although, the centrality of elections to democratic process can not be over-emphasised, democracy is not wholly centred on election. For democracy to evolve good governance, it must be liberal and participatory. In this sense, Liberal democracy entails not only free and fair elections in terms of voting administration, it requires a more comprehensive fairness of political competition embodied in the concept of a just and open competition. In a liberal democracy, the electoral arena is open, and the playing field is reasonably level.

Only in a free society with opportunity of free participation and respects for citizens' rights can good governance be achieved. True democracy places emphasis on freedom, and open competition, popular and meaningful participation, responsiveness, transparency and accountability. Freedom to organise, freedom to protest anti-people policies and freedom to demand and assert citizens' rights and interests, freedom of the press to report, investigate and expose government policies and actions without fear or favour. According to Diamond (2005), “Only in a climate of true political and civil freedom can a country achieve the absolute

fundamental condition for development: responsible government—that is government that is committed to the advancement of the public good, rather than the private interests of its own officials and their families and their cronies”.

Good governance includes the capacity to formulate and implement sound policies, and the respect of citizens and the state for the institutions that govern economic and social interactions. Good governance has been closely linked to “the extent to which a government is perceived and accepted as legitimate, committed to improving the public welfare and responsive to the needs of its citizens, competent to assure law and order and deliver public services, able to create an enabling policy environment for productive activities; and equitable in its conduct” (Sharma, 2007). It is a broader sphere of public sector management; legal framework for development; accountability; the legitimacy of government; information and technology; the competence of the government to appropriate policies, make timely decisions; implement the decisions effectively and deliver services (Cheema and Maguire, 2004).

## 2. Theoretical framework

The need to theorise about the nature of control and the role of leadership in democracy and good governance occasions the study of elites by Vilfredo Pareto (1848-1923), and Gaetano Mosca (1858-1941) (Dowse and Hughes, 1989). The elite theory is a philosophical explanation of the role of the leadership in governance as it affects public policy including all socio-economic and political matters. If the formal structures of government are central to explaining ‘who gets what, when and how’, then the study and relevance of elite in policy process is equally important. Elites dominate the formal institutions of government and are a determining factor in governance and decision making processes. Elites are the decision makers in the society whose power is not subject to control by any other body in the society.

There are varying perceptions on the role of elites in democracy. While some believe that elites are bulwarks of democracy protecting it from the dangers of totalitarianism, the soul source of value and element of democratic consolidation and political stability and constituting integrating force in the society without which it may fall part; others believe that elites are chief threat to the survival of democracy (Dowse and Hughes, 1983). They have exceptional access to key positions in the society and appear to wield control over crucial policies disproportionate to their number and they, to this extent, can understandably be a living contradiction to the notion of democracy. On this philosophical basis, it is assertive that credit of democratic stability and good governance should be given to the elite. Also, blame of democratic failure and bad governance will also be on the elite, since it is central to governance stability or otherwise. It is scientific to study and analyse governance and democratic process in any country using elite theory.

Elite theory is premised on a number of assumptions:

- The society consists of two categories: the selected few, who are capable and, therefore, have the right to supreme leadership; and the vast masses of people who are desired to be ruled;

- That the majority of human beings are apathetic, indolent and slavishly uninformed about what goes on in the administrative system and permanently incapable of self government. That is, the elite decides on the structure, the personnel, the process of public policies of the administrative system;
- Hence, the structure, substance and output of the administrative system may be viewed as the preferences and values of the governing elite (Dowse and Hughes, 1983).

The elite theory postulates that public policy reflects the values and preferences of the elite rather than demands of the masses. The elite consist of those few individuals who wield powers and hold leading positions in the strategic aspects of society. The majority, the masses, only obey and are guided, controlled and governed by the few. Many of the elites do not hold formal or legal authoritative powers but are rather behind the scene, teleguiding and manipulating overt political and policy actions (Ikelegbe, 1994). It is on the basis of presumptions that the masses are contented and are incapable of challenging the authoritative position of the elite that informs elites' reflection of policy and its processes.

The elite theory directs attention to the source of policy flow and whose interests public policies serve. The theory attempts a realistic explanation of the source of policy by predicating it in the elite rather than the masses. It also explains the nature and source of policies in Nigeria. Various policies in the public service can also be viewed as emanating from the Nigerian elite- the political, administrative and economic leaders. This is contradictory to democratic tenets that lend credence to participation, openness, accountability and freedom in all spheres of societal life.

Elites are capable of setting the tone of society by coming out with policies of their choice. The level of stability and progress achieved in any society is a function elites' initiatives. The civil unrest experienced in Africa and the advancement of Europe can not be divorced from the inclusion and activities of elites in these areas. The fact that Nigeria is oscillating between democratic stagnancy and governance backwardness is reflexive of elites' pursuit of personal aggrandisement and promotion of egocentricism rather than altruistic policies, that are nationalistic and 'peoplecentric' in nature. Peoplecentric policies are policies that are people-centred, whose objective primarily is designed to engage the citizenry and serve the interest of the people and the community.

### **3. Source and nature of democratisation in Nigeria**

Ordinarily, democratisation process does not exist in a vacuum; it is a process of evolving an enduring democracy. Democratisation is a process directed towards democratic consolidation. This process is naturally characterised by competition, struggle, agitation and conflict. It is therefore expected essentially to subsist within a legal framework, a set of rules designed to coordinate and impinge on individual's behaviour in the society. Arising from the incompatibility of interests inherent in political and power relations, behaviour of actors needs to be regulated, coordinated, shaped and made to be in line with the existing rules in order to ensure fairness, equity, justice and transparency which, in turn, guarantee peace and harmonious relationship among the political actors (Arowolo and Lawal, 2010).

Any democratisation process that is characterised by political violence may be fraught with three weaknesses: poorly designed rules; poverty of political leadership and weak judicial administration. Flowing from this, the paper hypothesizes thus: the weaker the rules design, the more the incident of political violence; and the more the political violence, the more irresponsible and irresponsive the government is (Arowolo and Lawal, 2010).

Struggle in politics is a normal phenomenon since it has to do with competition, what is abnormal is the violence that has engrossed political struggle and power relations in Nigeria. Political violence is motivated by political actors who see politics not only as do or die affairs, but also as an extension of birth rights of individuals or groups and so real or imagined opposition is silenced, or worse still, eliminated. For the purpose of political recognition and relevance, well-placed individuals and groups continue to enjoy tenacity of office at the detriment of other 'disadvantaged' groups and individuals. Politics and political relations become stressed and strained. Intolerance ensues rather than accommodation; rancour rather than harmony and conflict in place of cooperation

Political violence is gradually becoming a permanent feature of democratisation in Nigeria. This is because every campaign ground is soaked with violence and killings. It is capable of truncating Nigeria's democracy if not curtailed. Democratisation process in Nigeria is growing at a very sluggish trend, thus threatening the basis of political stability, deepening the root of political gerontocracy and strengthening sectional political hegemony (Arowolo and Aluko, 2010).

Political violence seems to be institutionalised since it emanates from the corridor of power and so politics and political activities become exclusive rights of the 'dirty' politicians who make politics dirty in the first place. The fact that political game in Nigeria is played at the variance with set rules makes it a dirty game. Politics is a clean game outside the shores of Africa and it becomes dirty at its importation to Africa. Politics must have been infested with greed, tribalism, intolerance, injustice and parochial instinct of political leadership (Arowolo and Aluko, 2010).

Aside the fact that political violence leads to politically motivated killings, it also scares away responsible, intelligent and credible individuals from contesting elective positions. The cumulative effect is bad governance arising from bad leadership. Nigeria's democracy is being manipulated by those in power. State machinery is being employed to maintain their hold on power. The Obasanjo's administration was noted for its selective judgement and flagrant disrespect and disobedience for the rule of law; this is also a function of ineffective rules. The administration hunted its opponents with the awe of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC).

It is only natural and expected, therefore, that in a situation where political opponents are clamped down upon, the political space becomes heated and tension-soaked as the opponents strive to 'balance the terror'. During the period under review (especially between 1999 and 2011), election into political offices was constantly secured by those who had the monopoly of weaponry and thuggery, as violence, rather than the electorate determined who occupied what position.

Political violence inhibits free competition and cripples political participation. In this case, there is latent and potential disaffection, rancour and acrimony that heat up the political system. The effects of political

violence on democracy are many: First, it disenfranchises qualified Nigerian voters. Second, it leads to the election of irresponsible political leadership. Third, political violence destroys the future of the Nigerian youths by enlisting them into thuggery and consequently turning them to armed robbers and hired assassins. Fourth, it contributes to the dearth of responsible and responsive future leaders as youths of today have been taught the act of violence rather than compromise, negotiation, conciliation and sportsmanship (Arowolo and Lawal, 2010).

The major obstacle to credible electoral process during the period under review was that the party in power did not have respect for the rule of law. The law was so weak such that the former president Obasanjo felt he was above the law. He chose the court orders to obey. He only obeyed court orders that were favourable to him and his party. Example of this was the forceful ejection of the Vice President, Atiku Abubakar, from his official quarters of Aguda House and the withdrawal of his allowances because the Vice President decided to join another party and Obsanjo subsequently declared his seat vacant. Abubakar Atiku went to court and the court declared the action of the President unconstitutional but Obasanjo refused to comply with the court orders. Another example is the withholding of monthly allocations of the twenty (20) Local Governments in Lagos State even in contravention of the court orders.

#### **4. Democracy, political participation and good governance: the interface**

Democracy, on its own, does not connote good governance. It is not an end in itself but a means to an end. Deep-rooted and consolidated democracy in form of liberalism or what Cheema and Maguire (2004) call 'maximalist democracy' indeed has been found to be able to engender good governance. According to them, maximalist democracy encompasses "various rights and liberties that have to be associated with a competitive and inclusive system of government. Diamond (1999), while appraising the maximalist approach of democracy, submits that democracy is a concept that allows for fundamental human rights, broadening political participation and guaranteeing credible and periodic election.

For democracy to evolve good governance, Linz and Stepan (1999) suggest five inter-related conditions that must exist which include: the rule of law to guarantee citizens' freedoms and independent associational life, functional state bureaucracy which can be used by the democratic government to deliver public good, free and lively civil society, a relatively autonomous and valued political society and an institutionalised economic society.

Political participation is *sine qua non* to good governance. Political participation, which includes citizens' involvement in the decision making process, contribution to public debate on national issues and voting, needs to be encouraged. Wider political participation naturally endows policies that emanate from that process with legitimacy, as people feel sense of belonging and can lay claim of ownership to such policies. Policies are more likely to be sustainable when they receive popular understanding and support, most especially when women, youths and minorities have input into governmental decisions and also be provided with mechanism through which unfavourable policies are contested and protested against. The purpose of

broad inclusion of citizens in the policy making arrangement is to create sense of belonging and awareness necessary for the sustainable of policy even if it is a short-term painful policy that will provide long-term reward. This public participation model is potent enough to consolidate democracy and engender good governance.

Since most people in Nigeria desire economic development and the physical improvement of their infrastructure and environments, responsive government will be such that seeks and promotes economic development. On its own, good governance depicts the degree to which institutions of a particular country (such as Executive, Legislature or Judiciary) and processes (such as the role of political parties in election) are transparent, accountable to the people and allow them to freely participate in decisions that affect their lives. Good governance is when the authority of the government and sovereignty reside ultimately with the people and are responsive to them (Diamond, 2005). Government and its institutions must, as a matter of welfare policy, be pro-poor and should promote human development of all citizens. Robert Dahl (1989) identifies three elements that distinguish democracy from other forms of authoritarianism: the democratic process promotes individual and collective freedom, it promotes human development and the democratic process, though not perfect, as the best way by which people can protect and advance their common interests and goods.

The beauty of good governance stems from its tendencies to empower citizens the opportunities to use their discretion and provides with opportunities of self-fulfillment and self-actualisation by deliberately enhancing the capacity of individual citizen, who will in turn transform other factors of production into productive purposes for national development. Human development is the means through which other forms of development are achieved. Good governance must indeed democratise the process of decision making in a way to guarantee the involvement of the groups for which decisions are being made. For example, wealth creation programme can only be potent and sustainable only if the affected group is involved at all levels of decision making process.

Governance is good when it is not discriminatory and tends to treat every member of society according to the established norms; laws should be applied to both the haves and the have-nots in the society. Citizens regardless of social status, ethnic origin or sex, should be given unrestrained access to justice and that judiciary, as an arbiter, should be independent and neutral in the interpretation of law and efficient manner. Expectedly therefore, good governance is achievable in the atmosphere of sustenance of the rule of law. Good governance should also focus mostly on results and not processes in order to engender development. It should be measured on government's delivery inputs. That is, good governance is not about budget provisions; it is about actual accomplishment and its good intentions. Good governance is not only critical to development but should also have the capacity to use resources effectively to create wealth and, in addition, induce economic growth and engender sustainable development.

Finally, democracy, political participation and good governance promote development. Liberal and consolidated democracy puts considerable constraints on the individuals to behave within the confines of the law and also allow the electorate to determine who occupies what position. The institutions of good governance must be funded, staffed, trained, equipped and be made independent in a manner that will

investigate, expose, and punish corrupt conduct, and thus vigorously discourage it in the future. Good governance can be enhanced through enhancing the quality of democracy, including the devolution and decentralisation of power and resources, protection of human rights, removal of corruption, speeding up of justice and strengthening electoral commission through viable and sustainable reforms.

## **5. Political violence and political participation in Nigeria**

Democracy and good governance crisis occurs when there is deliberate frustration and manipulation of democratic process. The crisis of democracy inevitably induces crisis of good governance and the prospects of democracy lead to good governance. This is because democracy is equipped with virtues that are capable of engendering good governance.

Reading into the administration of Obasanjo between 2003 and 2007, there were series of political violence in the country. The potency and tempo of violence drastically increased as there was proliferation of arms and ammunition that led to the introduction of the use of thugs and assassins to secure election victory. Cases of political violence and politically motivated killings abound. The Lagos state governorship aspirant, Eng. Funsho Williams, Ekiti State governorship aspirant Dr. Ayo Daramola and Harry Marshall, an All Nigeria Peoples Party (ANPP) chieftain in Rivers state were all gruesomely murdered (The Nation, 2006).

There was political violence in Ondo, Ekiti, Oyo and Osun States immediately after the announcement of April 14, 2007 gubernatorial elections in these states as lives and property were lost in this mayhem (Oluwatoyin, 2007). The PDP flag-off Campaign in the South-West held in Akure, Ondo State heralding the 2007 General Elections was marked by violence as lives were lost and many others injured. Political violence and politically motivated killings are numerous. Political campaigns in Lagos state during this period were shrouded by violence of the highest order, as each campaign point recorded lost of lives. But the questions that readily come to one's mind are: Why was the increase in the spate of political violence and killings? Why have the perpetrators not been brought to book?

This trend suggests that democracy in Nigeria is not only growing at a very slow trend but also oscillates between stagnancy and backwardness, thus degenerating into a crisis level where democratic ideals become threatened and governance becomes privatised, if not personalised, by the powerful. This, indeed, impairs the pace of political stability, deepens the root of political gerontocracy and strengthens sectional political hegemony. Present democracy in Nigeria is crisis-ridden and suffers from several problems which include but not limited to the following: democracy is being practised within inefficient and non-viable rules.

The readiness of the stakeholders to play according to the rules often depends on the ability of the state to ensure compliance without fear or favour. The process itself allows for manipulation of existing rules. Institutionalisation of electoral violence and politically motivated killings stares away responsible, intelligent and credible individuals from contesting elective positions. Election victory is a function of level of intimidation and rigging. The cumulative effect is bad governance arising from bad leadership. Primordial tendency and ethnicity affect voting pattern in Nigeria, the country is ethnic-based and leaders tend to have



primordial loyalty rather than nationalistic tendencies. Democratization is often directed towards consolidation of ethnicity.

Poverty of politics and politics of poverty is another factor. The rich political actors in Nigeria target the already feeble and disenchanted mind of the poor to secure their election victory. Politics has been so monetised to the extent that an average, credible Nigerian can not afford its exorbitance. Politics, therefore, becomes avenue to create and sustain poverty through looting of funds meant for developmental purposes. Leadership ineptitude and promotion of personal aggrandisement at the expense of national interests grievously affect democracy in Nigeria and makes the dream of attaining good governance impossible.

Democratic institutions in Nigeria are very fragile and are often unable to protect and promote sustainable democracy. Interregnum misrule of the military weakened the democratic institutions like judiciary and legislature. Flagrant disrespect for and disobedience to the constitution has become a feature that is conspicuous in Nigerian democratic experience, coupled with weak or lack of political will and capacity to punish electoral offenders. Other crises facing democracy and good governance in Nigeria include: dependent and weak judicial system; poverty and ignorance; corruption; citizenship, settlers/strangers crisis; absence of internal democracy in political parties; political intolerance and winner-takes-all syndrome; inexistent deep-rooted ideology in political parties; self-serving legislature and so on.

Nigeria's democracy is being manipulated by those in power. They employ and monopolise state machinery to maintain their hold on power. The Obasanjo's administration, for instance, was noted for its selective judgement and flagrant disrespect for and disobedience to the rule of law; this is also a function of ineffective rules and weak institution. The administration hunted its opponents with the awe of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC). It is only natural and expected, therefore, that in a situation where political opponents are clamped down upon, the political space becomes heated and tension-soaked as the opponents strive to 'balance the terror'.

During the 1999, 2003 and 2007 general elections, election into political offices was constantly secured by those who had the monopoly of weaponry and thuggery, as violence, rather than the electorate determined who occupied what position. This is clearly antithetical to the ideals of democracy. Any claim to democracy must essentially embrace the following principles: a high degree of popular participation; competitive choice; openness; the enjoyment of civil and political liberties by the citizenry in concrete terms; accountability of the leadership and political tolerance.

One of the notable crises of democracy and good governance in Nigeria is political violence. This is so as political violence inhibits free competition and cripples political participation but promotes mediocrity. In this case, there is latent and potential disaffection, rancour and acrimony that heat up the political system. The effects of political violence on democracy are many, they include: disenfranchisement of qualified Nigerian voters; election of irresponsible political leadership; political violence destroys the future of the Nigerian youths by enlisting them into thuggery and consequently turning them to armed robbers and hired assassins; dearth of responsible and responsive future leaders as youths of today may have been taught the act of violence rather than compromise, negotiation, conciliation and sportsmanship.

## 6. Conclusion and way forward

The paper dwelt extensively on democracy and good governance in Nigeria. While juxtaposing democracy and good governance, it concluded that the crisis in one would inextricably lead to the crisis in the other. It is evident, therefore, that the crisis of democracy and good governance in Nigeria in the last decade is myriad and complex. The bulk of which was created by leadership ineptitude arising from electoral frauds.

Democracy in Nigeria since independence is practised with regard to subjective factors and primordial loyalty to one's place of birth, social connection and group affinity. Consequently, voting pattern has been ethnic-based. Democratization is always directed towards consolidation of ethnicism. Campaigns are not issue-based and election victory is a function of level of intimidation, thuggery and rigging. Sub national consideration has displaced national interest and mediocrity took preference over merit and competence in the election of national leaders.

The unfolding events in Nigeria evidently point to a departure from the guides of democratic ethos and ethics. Politics in Nigeria has been described as sectional politics where denial of rights takes priority in the distribution of and access to national resources. The segregated politics of the governments at all levels create primordial ethnic loyalties where groups jostle for the "national cake" in a way that could inhibit the continuity of the Nigerian State. Ajayi (1995) recaptures this assertion when he opines that "politics and political parties were ethno-centrally based. Sub national considerations overshadowed national interest. Primordial politics and the syndrome of the 'son of the soil' took preference over merit and competence in the choice of national leaders.

The culture of intolerance that leads to denial of rights to participate in politics has made individual to think and believe that fighting for the national interests is a perversion and in contrast, fighting for individuals and groups is 'an acceptable norm' in Nigeria. Politics and political behaviour in the country are soaked in the 'miry clay of zero sum' where tenacity of office has become a rule rather than exception. Onyeoziri (2002) emphasized the evil of denial of rights when he warned that:

*By subjecting the minority nationalities to the domination of the majority nationalities and also subjecting the entire Nigerian edifice to the domination of one of the regions, regionalism questioned the legitimacy of the Nigerian federation. The inherent inequality in the latter also fostered hostility and competition among the component units of the nation state. This in turn excited subunits nationalism against nationalism for the Nigerian nation-state. Each of these affects of the policy of regionalism: threat to system stability; alienation of citizen loyalty from the Nigerian state; undermining of the legitimacy of the political order.*

Rolling back doldrums of bad governance perpetrated and perpetuated by anti democratic forces requires building strong democratic institutions that surpass the tenure and manipulation of the political actors that create them.

Some of the issues in the way forward are discussed here: there is need for viable electoral reform. Reforming electoral processes in Nigeria will accord the citizens sense of belonging and participation as their

votes count and their leaders emanate directly from them. Electoral frauds have also been discovered to be the major impediments to development. It is the greatest threat to economic development and unity. In fact, other impediments gravitate around electoral frauds. It is, therefore, imperative to reform the process to enhance quality, free and fair elections. Reform is also needed to stabilise the polity.

Electoral reforms will completely eliminate political violence, sit-tight syndrome, corruption and ineptitude and improve political participation. Reform is also capable of bringing about good governance, as meritocracy rather than mediocrity determines who occupies what position. The inseparable synergy between politics and economy makes reform in electoral processes a matter of necessity. Political stability creates economic stability. To evolve robust economy therefore, it is desirable to have electoral reforms geared towards political stability.

Judiciary should be strengthened and be alive with its responsibility. Judiciary should be bold enough to give verdict in favour of those who truly won elections. The psychological implication of this is: One, it will deter politicians from wasting money, time and energy on hiring thugs and stock-piling arms. Two, it will engender the emergence of responsible political leadership. Three, it will divest the youths of destructive tendencies. Four, it will encourage political participation and free exercise of franchise on the part of the electorate. Electoral reforms should also be backed by the political will to implement and enforce. Perpetrators of political violence should be brought to book against all odds, as this will serve as deterrent to others and rid democratisation process of violence.

There should be a minimum of six months litigation period for the conclusion of grievances and all electoral litigations arising from electoral malpractices before swearing-in or constituting new government. This is to prevent a case whereby state funds are used to pursue electoral litigation and using state resources to hire thugs and unleash terror on the people. Appropriate sanctions, ranging from jail term without option of fines to permanent disqualification from contesting future election, should be imposed on any erring political actors and INEC officials that are involved in or known to have aided any form of electoral malpractices. Any breach of the electoral law (no matter how insignificant) should render the election invalid and void and the next highest scoring candidate should be declared winner. Election re-run should be seriously discouraged in view of the heavy resources required for such exercise.

It has been widely observed that Nigeria does not require strong men but strong institutions. Strong institutions are capable of compelling the occupants of the offices to behave according to the dictates of their offices. Another important point to note is the need for good leadership. Leadership is good when it pursues public good and places national interests over and above personal interests. Leadership, in this sense, is responsive and responsible.

The late President Umar Yar'adua constituted Electoral Reforms Committee. The committee was to, *inter alia*, look into electoral issues in Nigeria with a view to coming out with acceptable and viable electoral reforms necessary for democratic consolidation in Nigeria. The committee, among other things, recommended that INEC chairman and its commissioners should not be appointed by the President but by National Judicial Commission (NJC) and that the funding of INEC should come from Consolidated Fund,

independent candidacy, proscription of carpet crossing among legislators and so on are recommended by the committee. It is suggested that Uwais report should be fully implemented.

Another important point is to make Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) truly independent. This could be done by structuring the composition of INEC. The composition of INEC should be broad-based. This can be achieved through the following suggestions: involvement and appointment of representatives of all major political parties in the constitution of INEC; the major political parties can be determined through the seats won in the National Assembly; membership of INEC should also comprise the representatives of the civil society organisations, labour unions, etc.; the nominees from these organisations should be sent to the National assembly for ratification; the confirmed members to select their chairman, who shall not be partisan and that the funding of INEC should come from consolidated revenue account.

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