

Electoral Process, Prevention of Violence and Good Governance: The Nigerian Media and Challenges by 2015

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Abstract

The democratic consolidation of the electoral process remains elusive in Nigeria. Often times, a tortuous history of the elusiveness has been ascribed to the epileptic structural (economic), institutional dynamics and psycho-cultural factors that underlies the problematic nature of the electoral process. Sadly, the issue of insecurity and terrorism is manifest in some part of the country steers a major challenge towards achieving a sustainable political order in the country. Thus, the focus of this paper is to exorcise a critical examination of the issues bedeviling good governance and the consequences of the maligned electoral processes so as to proffer solutions to the challenges that may hinder the success of the 2015 elections in Nigeria. Thus amongst others, it recommends that ideally the structural, institutional and psycho-cultural issues must be addressed including security as these will promote political stability and economic growth in the country.

Keywords: Electoral Process, Democratic Sustenance, Consolidation, Good Governance, Political Violence & Development

Background to the study

The twist of events in the political history of Nigeria has left majority of the electorates and keen political observers in doubts about requisite standards and conduct of elections in the country. As a result, speculations are rife with the belief that Nigeria's political organization has been predicated mostly on force as against the free-will of the people.

The situation has made political violence a prominent part of the political culture we inherited from the colonialists. Before the introduction of the Westminster or parliamentary system of government, the political culture of different people from different regions that later became an entity now known as Nigeria stipulated the process of leadership selection without crisis.

In Nigeria, power sharing between government and the governed has not reflected true democracy but autocracy, an attempt to redress the injustice and to attain leadership position by the politically marginalized often times result to political violence. The ugly developments in the electoral processes are yielded by the greediness and selfishness of our political leaders in the process of sharing the state resources. As a result, violence has been predominant not only in the context of colonial and military administrations, but extends to sporadic shootings, hijacking of ballot boxes and destruction of lives and properties in various parts of the country.

Aim/Objective

This paper is aimed at examining the electoral processes and causes of political violence in the country and proffering lasting solutions to the prevention of electoral violence titled towards providing good governance and stable democracy in order to overcome the electoral challenges in 2015.

The Relevance of Electoral System and Franchise

An electoral process is a democratic structure entitled primarily as a device to determine which of the several competing groups shall run the government since the administrative operations must be in the hands of a small group of people. In a democracy, the electorate chooses credible candidates- the majority policy officials in a free and relatively frequent election. This is the requisite standard acceptable as norm for a stable democratic political system that is sustained all over the world.

The importance of a good electoral system cannot be over-emphasized especially when it is anchored on viable democratic principles for good governance. A political pundit and academia, Professor Nekabari Ntete-Nna (2002:317) opined that, electoral systems have profound impact on political systems in Nigeria. The reason is because the electoral system serves as a network of competitive relationships in the conduct of elections in the country. Also, it has been singled out as the most important determinant of the relative strength of political parties with particular policies.

Reaffirming the foregoing viewpoint, Scott Marinwaring (1990) gave the following reasons why electoral system is important to stable democracies which foster sustainable social and economic development:-

1. The electoral system has significant political consequences on the nature of parties and party systems. The effects are shaped by the behaviour of politicians and strategies of voters. The electoral system dictates the manner in which politicians and political parties organize themselves internally in order to function well.
2. The electoral system reveals interesting information about the predilections of politicians' behaviour, but politicians may occasionally be opportune to revise electoral legislations. This view was reiterated by Trzeliak and Mereky (1998:17) where it was upheld that, politicians' preferences about electoral legislations indicate a great deal about how they operate and how they perceive the political system.

The broad effect and impact of the electoral system on the political processes cannot be debunked in attaining sustained democratic structures and standards in a country like Nigeria. Mauric Divenger (1954) had emphatically noted that, electoral system and the political party systems determine the accuracy of political representation. Therefore, the following become significant in judging the electoral processes and systems in Nigeria.

- (i) Does the electoral system produce high quality parliamentarians?
- (ii) Does it produce good constituency men?
- (iii) Does the system produce collectively effective assembly (with stable majority)?
- (iv) To what extent does it reflect public opinion and public conscience?
- (v) Does it provide voters the opportunity to express their views?

If the foregoing is pacified by the political system, then Nigeria has all the requisite standards in the conduct of elections. However, Douglas Rae (2001) stipulates that, an electoral system is good only if it meets the following requirements.

- (1) It ensures representativeness.
- (2) It is equitable in its incidence.
- (3) It is easily understood and is easy to operate
- (4) It discourages electoral malpractices and electoral violence
- (5) It ensures some degree of stability in government.

The Electoral Process and Political Developments

Democracy is a form of government that allows for the widest spectrum of participation. More importantly, the electoral process is one of the factors that must ensure this participation. This symbiotic relationship actually goes beyond the rituals of routine elections, during which the electorate are called upon to choose their representatives but are afterwards ignored until their votes are needed at the next election.

Instead, the relationship between government and electors should be seen more in the organic sense of the democratic process, where those elected to public office serve at the pleasure of the electorate, a relationship sanctified by the election processes. The genuine concept of democracy calls for close and constant contact between the electorate and those to whom they have given their mandate through the electoral process so as to make the citizenry more kin to accept the democratic process in confidence. In that regard, the electorate should be able to hold those they have elected to public political offices accountable, if only to ensure that the electoral mandate held by the elected officials is not compromised. The election processes tend to ensure democratic consolidation and sustainability when it is clear that electoral rules and results are observed and accepted.

In the history of electoral politics in Nigeria, the vital connection between the elected and electors necessary for a liberal democracy has been missing. That is to say, the political responsibility of elected office holders, their accountability to the electorate and the sanctity of the electoral process has been elusive. There is no doubt that Nigerians express a desire for a democratic policy. But at the same time, the level of political will needed to ensure the realization of this objective has been absent or has not yet taken its place in the country's political culture.

This paper therefore probes the following issues:

- a. What role should the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) play in reaffirming the sanctity of the electoral process?
- b. Can a new electoral framework limit some of the negative features of electoral politics in Nigeria?
- c. Is election legislation consistently and effectively applied? And with what effect?
- d. Should Nigeria fundamentally review its election system and if so, to what extent?
- e. What kind of electoral reforms should Nigeria adopt to signal an end to, or at least a reduction of the country's much-discussed electoral problems, especially with the issues of security and challenges for the 2015 elections

Problems of the Electoral Processes

The electoral processes face many administrative and political problems that have consequently challenged meaningful, open and democratic elections in Nigeria. Among the most serious and blatant cases of electoral fraud are:

- a. Rigging (stuffing ballot boxes, over-bloating voting registers, special treatment of votes and election officials, disappearance or destruction of ballot boxes, etc.)
- b. Distortion or doctoring of results.
Such manipulation has its route in the prevailing political culture and has been emboldened by the lack of clear and universal political direction to protect the integrity of Nigeria's election processes.

Despite the serious nature of the above irregularities in the electoral processes, no single act undermined the confidence in the electoral processes in Nigeria as the annulment of the presidential elections of 12 June 1993. This act depicts a masterstroke against democracy and the democratization processes and has posed a threat to the country's corporate existence. Re-establishing the creditability of electoral politics and the confidence of the Nigerian electorate will need a concerted effort on the part of politicians, civil servants and electoral officials alike so as to ensure the sustainability of good governance in the country.

Other factors consistently cited as undermining competitive electoral politics in Nigeria include:

- a. Lack of discipline in the form, spirit and implementation of the election processes;
- b. Excessive monetization of politics in general;
- c. A "winners-take-all" philosophy pervasive among the political elite;
- d. The general level of poverty and illiteracy.
- e. The absence of clear ideological underpinnings of the political parties;
- f. Religious bigotry and, to a limited extent, ethnic chauvinism.

The Nigerian State and the Conduct of Elections

The Nigerian state has a responsibility to provide adequate logistics for INEC to successfully discharge its statutory duties of organizing and conducting elections. This responsibility means not to say that the state authorities and other levels of government must provide operational needs to survive the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) and the State Independent Electoral Commission (SIEC). This means these bodies and affiliate organs responsible for the peaceful conduct of elections must be adequately funded to ensure a credible electoral system for the country.

It is succinct to note that INEC is the statutory organ charged with the responsibility of administering the electoral laws of the country for each of the four elections (Governorship and State Assembly, National Assembly and Presidential). It is INEC that issue and release guidelines within three weeks before the actual date of any particular election. In terms of an election calendar that commences months before an election day, this is far too late for the effective management of an election body. These guidelines spell out the processes of candidate's nomination (an exercise carried out by the parties themselves). This is a process that must take place months not weeks, before an election.

In addition, the guidelines specify:

- a. The responsibility of INEC to screen and approve candidates to be nominated (this role is carried out with the assistance of the state security service);
- b. The manner in which the elections are to be conducted;
- c. The specific responsibilities of the party agents and the electoral officials up for the announcement of the results;
- d. The provisions for constituting election tribunals to hear complaints (where applicable);

In instances where the tribunals reversed the results declared by the INEC, elections are conducted by the latter. The classic case of the governorship election of the state of Adamawa provides a historical example of the event which INEC respects due processes. (Infact, the decision of the INEC to conduct a fresh governorship election after governor-elect Alhaji Abubakar Atiku left to become the running mate of the PDP presidential candidate was successfully challenged at the Supreme Court. Thus, the Deputy Governor-elect was sworn in as governor of Adamawa on 29 May 1999).

The principle of first past the post (FPTP), one of the features of the plurality majority electoral system, has historically been applied in conducting competitive party elections in Nigeria. In order to have relevance, elections have to be dynamic and, equally important; they must deepen the democratic processes. The colonial history of Nigeria is still a big burden on the country's electoral system. Like many former British colonial territories in Africa, Nigeria inherited the FPTP which has its advantages and disadvantages from the imperial system.

The profile of a Nigerian Parliament would most likely be quite different if based upon one of the other two broad categories of electoral systems, the prorated reflection of the electorate on a national basis and avoid the often heard argument that all the votes cast for the losing side are in a sense lost votes, the majority FPTP system is deeply embedded in the Nigerian political culture. There are, of course, positives to the FPTP system, namely a distinct constituent and parliamentary relationship, in which parliamentarians have a defined geographies constituency and constituents known clearly as who is representing them. However, a drawback to the FPTP is a large number of so-called lost votes that do not get allocated if cast for the losing candidate in a majority system. A proportional system succeeds in securing a more accurate profile of those whom the national electorate wants to see in office and often provides more diverse representation for ethnic groups that are geographically diluted. In a majority system, however, fraud at polling station level is more detrimental to the result as a few shifting votes in a few polling stations can begin to have a noticeable impact in a majority of results.

It does not appear that Nigerians are prepared to jettison to FPTP. At least; such was the finding from my limited nationwide understanding of the process. For instance, it was generally argued that the high level of illiteracy would not allow Nigerians profitably adopt and utilize any system that was highly technical and/or that would require a minimum level of literacy to operate. Even the argument that a proportional representation system is likely to lead to a reduction in the number of wasted votes would engender more equitable and inclusive representation does not seem to have impressed the citizenry.

The Causes, Problems and Effects of Electoral Violence on Democratic Developments

Political violence is the deliberate cause of disorder in the polity. It is a phenomenon that arises when there is disequilibrium in the institutional rule of the state. These deliberate acts of disorder are perpetuated mostly by youths who are influenced by leaders in position of trust. One of the causes of political violence ravaging the land is poverty, this is true as the major actors in the field of electoral violence are the youths who are given paltry sums of money to perpetrate the acts. It is believed that if the people are not living in abject poverty, they will not be induced to engage in political violence. In some areas, they youths look forward to election period to make money as they expect cash benefits from the candidates who provide them with arms and ammunitions to carry out the dastardly acts.

This is even more worrisome when government projects initiated by successive administrations are not faithfully implemented. For instance, the poverty alleviation programme was aimed at alleviating the sufferings of the masses and to make them self-sufficient thereby increasing the economic fortunes of the people. But unfortunately, this programme and others were hijacked by the rich to further better their economic fortunes, making the less advantaged people remain the same way they had been before the programme was initiated and implemented. Another example is the Bayelsa State Taxi Scheme, which was initiated by Dr. Goodluck Jonathan's administration in 2006 (now President of Federal Republic of Nigeria). The scheme was aimed at providing jobs for the helpless youths and to make them more focused and determined in life instead of sauntering around. But the reverse was the case as the taxis were diverted by the House of Assembly members and Commissioners as well as Permanent Secretaries who converted them to their wives as market vehicles or private cars leaving the actual beneficiaries roaming the streets of Yenagoa.

Another worrisome issue that causes political violence is political interests. The political interests of our leaders in positions of trust also contribute in causing violence during electioneering activities. This is true as jealous and over ambitious leaders adopt every means to control the youths to achieve their selfishly nurtured aims. It is aimed at sustaining their hold on the polity or to ensure their re-election or re-appointment to public office. This issue brings to mind the crises that rocked Anambra State under Chris Ngige (now a senator in the Federal House of Senate), Oyo state under Rasheed Ladoja and Lamidi Adedibu as governor and god-father respectively. Chris Ngige and Chris Uba fought and the people of the state experienced an unprecedented political violence in Anambra state. The bottom line of the crisis was who would control the political power of the state.

The control of political power also caused a similar crisis in Oyo State where Rasheed Ladojo held sway as governor and Lamidi Adedibu as the godfather and kingmaker of the state. The crux of the crisis was the political control of the state and that also determined the economic control of the state's resources. The crisis between the duos had to do with monetary resources and disbursements to the godfather, Lamidi Adedibu and also the determination of political appointments in the state. The situation degenerated to an extent that people lost their lives, the governor was impeached and his deputy governor Alao Akala was sworn in as governor, Later the court declared the impeachment illegal and unconstitutional and the latter reinstated.

The control of political power has also led to political assassinations in the country. The assumption of power in a true democratic regime is about popularity in the arena of public opinion. Political killings occur when some persons are more popular than those in power thereby threatening their hold on to such office and they are left with no option than to eliminate such perceived opponents. This was the case in Ekiti state when a World Bank official and a governorship hopeful, Chief Ayo Daramola was killed in his house. It was revealed that the popularity of the deceased threatened the incumbent Governor's re-election and this led to his assassination. Chief Daramola was using his office to execute projects that were due the state faithfully and that earned him good record in the state.

Similarly, there are the cases in Rivers State where Chief Marshal Harry and Chief A.K Dikibo were murdered in Abuja and Delta states respectively. The duo had irreconcilable differences with the then Governor of Rivers State Dr. Peter Odili, it was alleged that these perceived disagreements led to the demise of the two political kingmakers in Rivers State, even though this claim was not confirmed. The bottom-line was the quest for political power in the state.

The 2003 General Elections in Bayelsa State were plagued with violence especially, at Nembe and Southern Ijaw Local Government Areas. During the period under review, precisely at Oporoma the headquarters of Southern Ijaw Local Government Area, some people dressed in military camouflage killed about nine persons on the day of election. They were later discovered to be thugs working for a prominent politician in the state. While at Nembe, some candidates were killed and others chased out of the town or community. The situation was so bad that people had to flee the community for safety.

The pathetic acts of these thugs are so inhuman that in some local government areas, especially in Ogbia and Brass respectively, where dynamites were thrown at houses and boats to destroy ballot boxes and to kill whoever was working for the opposition. The situation was alarming and barbaric.

Thus, the pursuit of political interests of our leaders sometimes degenerates into political violence. Another case in point is the clash between Action Congress (AC) and People's Democratic Party (PDP) over political ambitions and ideology. Although, political interest is a cause of political violence, government patronage of cultism is also a cause of political violence. Some state governments are said to patronize cult groups so as to make them readily available for use any time the need arises. This follows the adage that he who pay the piper dictates the tune, so it is most likely that they will rise to the occasion anytime the need arises.

It is alleged that former Rivers State Government led by Dr. Peter Odili was sympathetic to the various cult groups and as such was patronizing them. It is the opinion of those who hold this view that these cult groups were used to carry out many dastardly activities. It is said that the supportive nature of the former government made the various cult groups readily available for use by the state government and other senior government officials in the state.

Another issue worth mentioning is corruption. The lucrative nature of political offices tends to attract violence during electioneering periods. This is true of the fact that candidates employ

every available means including violence and outright killing of opponents to occupy political offices. Succinctly, it would be recalled that a major witness to the election tribunal case between the People's Democratic Party (PDP) and the Action Congress (AC) in Ondo state was killed by unknown gunmen. Also, before the PDP primaries, one of the major contenders for the ticket of governorship seat, Chief Ayo Daramola was murdered in his home in Ekiti State.

Also, the People's Democratic Party (PDP) hopeful in Lagos State, chief Funsho Williams as well as Chief A.K. Dikibo of Rivers State also of the People's Democratic Party (PDP), South-South vice-Chairman and Chief Marshall Harry, a former People's Democratic Party stalwart who later cross carpeted to the All Nigerian People's Party due to irreconcilable differences and later became the South-South Vice Chairman of the party were also murdered by unknown gunmen in his house at the Federal Capital Territory Abuja.

The list is endless. These acts of killings were perpetrated to ensure the incumbent government held on political power as a result of the lucrative nature of the offices. Imagine a situation where the salary of a councilor is more than that which is received by a university professor, thereby throwing academic prowess to the wind. Consider a scenario where a local council chairman spends millions of naira belonging to the council like his personal funds.

Worse still, think of a situation where a governor of a state goes about purchasing aesthetic houses with state of the art designs in choice cities in different continents in the world. There is also the opportunity for a political office holder to wield awesome powers to use security to kill and maim as if they are above the law.

The evils sponsored by them have made them to do all within their power and even when they are constitutionally due to relinquish office; they try to elongate their tenure or worse still shop for a replacement that can effectively cover their crimes and enable them to continue to drain the national economy from behind the scenes. The struggle for power continues since the opposition, knowing what is being done by those in office, would also do all within their powers, including the use of violence and assassinations to make their way into office.

The reason for the above situation is that the offices are very lucrative and attractive and that leads to corruption being perpetrated by such political office holders. This situation is so alarming because everybody wants to use every opportunity to have a bite of the national cake.

This is corroborated by the staggering discoveries about political office holders by the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) headed by Mallam Nuhu Ribadu and the Independent Corrupt Practices and other related Offences Commission (ICPC) which was headed by Justice Akanbi and later Justice R. Agboola. The revelations by the commissions are so disturbing that the international community became convinced of the need to partner with the EFCC and ICPC to join in the fight against corruption.

Sustaining Democracy and Good Governance: The Media and Challenges for 2015 Elections in Nigeria

The proponents of democracy has ascribed good governance as imbued with the fundamental characteristics of accountability, transparency, efficiency and effectiveness, responsiveness, forward vision and the propagation of the rule of law. Aside the orthodox definition of representativeness anchored on the tenets underlying democratic principles and ideals what have become fashionable in democracy is irreconcilable falsity of good governance.

It is succinct to note that in its report on governance, the world bank defined good governance as predictable, open and enlightened policy making, a bureaucracy imbued with a professional ethos acting in furtherance of the public good, the rule of law, transparent processes, and a strong civil society participation in public affairs. While, poor governance, on the other hand is characterized by arbitrary policy making, unaccountable bureaucracies, un-enforced or unjust legal systems, the abuse of executive power, a civil society unengaged in public life, and system over-run with wide spread corruption (Sylva, 2008:5).

The sustenance of modern democratic ideals depends largely upon good governance. In supporting the foregoing, Jega (2007:159-163) provides the

- (i) Civil Education: In order to create a patriotic and responsible citizenry, as well as strengthen and consolidate national democratic political culture, even under normal circumstances, civil education is essential. This is so; because for so long the country was bred under military rule in which the psyche has been conditioned and militarized before the transition to civil democratic rule in the country.
- (ii) Restoration of the Rule of law and the independence of the judiciary: The sustenance of rule of law and constitution is central to democratic praxis and good governance. Therefore, in order to ensure the sustainability of democratic ideals and to abate the challenges in the forthcoming elections in 2015, respect for due process, executive-lawfulness which must be in contrast to executive lawlessness must be predicated on effective strategies of constitutionalism. These could be achieved through strengthening the independence of the judiciary and law enforcement agencies in the country
- (iii) Effective use of the mass media: The media has a positive role to play in the struggle to bring about sustainable democracy and good governance in the country. Often times, the mass media is referred to as the "4th Estate of the Realm". It remains a pivotal force in the dissemination of information to the largely dispatched heterogeneous audiences in the society. In discharging these fundamental functions, Jega (2007:164), described the media and its practitioners as the last line of defence for democracy and good governance. Therefore to subvert the challenge of the forth coming elections come 2015, requires absorbed commitment and credible reporting of events regarding the electoral processes in the country.

Preventing Electoral Violence Ahead the 2015 Elections in Nigeria: The Way Forward
The way forward in sanitizing the electoral system and further breakdown of law and order requires genuine concern from all citizens of this great nation. Therefore, stakeholders' obligations must not be titled towards the attainment of credible outcome of election results

only, but making sure our nascent democracy is engendered with the ability to provide an environment of peace and tranquility that is nurtured to bring about sustainable social and political developments.

Stakeholders' obligations are enunciated as follows:-

(1) The Government

For too long constitutional and administrative inadequacies have built-up in frustrating genuine conduct of free and fair elections in this country as well as compromising the political evolution and democratic advancements. A major turnaround towards violence during and after elections requires efforts of the government in providing adequate security and enhancing transparency in the conduct of elections. The on-going electoral reforms enunciated by former President Olusegun Obasanjo and redefined by late President Umaru Musa Yar'adua, and now by the President Dr. Goodluck Jonathan, majority of Nigerians' believe would usher in not only a new breath of peace, law and order but also repose confidence on INEC and the government respectively.

(2) The Independent Electoral Commission (INEC)

Democracy is a consensual system. Its legitimacy comes from an acceptance of fairness and transparency of its procedures for elections to state offices and policy making. The sustainability of democracy depends on the maintenance of public confidence as well as confidence of political groups in fairness of these procedures. If a group considers that rules and procedures have been designed or manipulated to its disadvantage, it would withdraw its loyalty to the constitutional and political system, regarding itself justified in ignoring or breaking the law and promoting its interests.

The independent electoral commission is the only organ for now that is saddled with the responsibility of ensuring a transparent and reliable conduct of elections. Therefore, INEC should be mindful of the fact that elections are the most striking manifestation of the sovereignty of the people, who would feel cheated if the value of votes were distorted or negated by an unfair electoral system.

(3) Religious Bodies

The intrusion of religion into Nigeria's politics is a clear threat to democracy, causing violent eruptions and threatening peace. The federal government must be firm on the secularity of the Nigerian state. Because of the popularity of religion in Nigeria, the government must avoid any entanglement with or manipulation of religion. The freedom and rights of all religious groups in Nigeria must be guaranteed. Religious tolerance should be taught in schools by offering integrated or comparative religious studies. The laws on religious practices must be made clear and enforced. This media must help in preaching religious tolerance. On other hand, for this nation to enjoy a violence free environment and promote political structures and sustained democracy, religious leaders must continue preaching in their churches and mosques to the youths and their followers the need for embrace peace and eschew moral decadence in society. Above all, religious bodies must reform themselves to be democratic, transparent and accountable.

(4) Traditional Institutions

The government should de-emphasize the role of traditional institutions in politics. The appointment, maintenance and deposition of rulers should be the prerogative of the people through the king-makers and not government.

Government must respect the democratic verdict of peace makers and not interfere or overturn it on political grounds. Traditional institutions should confine their activities and roles to maintaining the traditions of the people, especially the arts, which is an effective vehicle for building a culture of democracy. However, the roles expected of traditional institutions and leaders are to re-orientate the youths in their domain to discard violence during and after elections. Rather they-the youths should engage themselves in skillful and meaningful activities that would promote their social and economic well-being in the society.

(5) Civil Liberty Societies and Non-governmental Organization (NGOs)

There is a vital role for the civil society or organized socio-political associations. To produce strong viable parties, stabilize the party system and install responsible and purposeful governments, civil society groups must work with members of the political class and help generate appropriate policies, programmes and modalities for their realization. It is now realized worldwide that governments do not perform optimally until civil society is conscious, vigilant and mobilized, for action. Indeed, the foundation upon which a disciplined modern industrial democracy (with its stress on an equitable electoral order) can arise in Nigeria, or any part thereof, is predicated upon this advocated concept of partnership between civil society and government or a section of the political class. For one thing, the arrangement works against vicious rootless political actors/warlords and cash-and-carry politics. As well as ensure that the people are not alienated from governance. Indeed, recent events have shown that politics should not be left to charlatans, rascals, crooks and the growing legion of mafia bands that have hijacked politics at local, state and national levels in Nigeria; that organized civil society must get involved and help align community-based on people oriented programmes and values with government policy.

The bottom-line is that civil society groups or socio-political organizations should constitute themselves into bulwark bodies to checkmate emerging political warlords and any vicious political actors who desecrate the land and strive to hold the people to ransom. Such an organization should align itself with a political party, or in fact, foster one, and must continually sift through the rabble of future aspiring political officeholders and party leaders, nominate or back credible one, help organize and fund their campaigns and generally ferry them across.

The idea is to return politics to an intimate group/community affair, reduce the enormous burden put on the shoulders of political office aspirants who are forced by circumstance, the pervasive subsisting foul political culture, to generally channel huge private capital into political contests in order to make an impact. This is a process, a political culture that clearly makes political corruption vote rigging, rather than compelling to do things right. It is obvious that when one spends large personal fortunes to contest elections, the thought of defeat gives rise to desperation and instincts to win by all means, to insulate one against a possible loss of that

investment. This is a recipe for electoral fraud, on the other hand, if one wins, the first thing is to attack public treasury in whatever guise, to recover one's expenditure or profit from that investment. To forestall these negative consequences, civil society must involve itself in politics. The involvement should partly cushion the individual contestant against throwing huge personal or private capital into the fray and risking pauperization. But more importantly, it would promote democracy, a fair electoral order, community and people-based political programmes to make for a better society and commensurate development.

(6) The Mess Media

The role of the media is better understood from the perspective of social responsibility which appeals to the journalist to promote human rights, democracy, peace and international understanding. However, in its patriotic effort to perform this duty, the journalists in Nigeria have had to operate in a condition of extreme need and neglect occasioned by legal constraints that restrict press freedom.

Nigerians depends on the media for information and everyone, individuals and government approach the media and even force the media to cover stories and issues considered to be of interest to the mass society, thereby getting involved in playing social responsibility role in the nation's political development which I think is a good thing for humanity. The electronic media has such immediacy of impact that affects people simultaneously and influences their opinions on democracy and the art of governance. For instance, the effect of parliamentarians trading punches in the House of Representatives or display of bags of bribe monies in the Senate in the glare of national television, as had happened during the ill-fated third term bid of erstwhile Obasanjo government, went a cap in hand and long way to influence the perception of people and the amount of confidence they may have on the government and politicians in general reorientation.

Conclusion

Sustainable democracy is tantamount to the will of the people which of course, are derived from the objectives of free and fair electoral system, and that is the hallmark of liberal democracy and good governance.

In Nigeria, the electoral processes in most cases are characterized by inconsistencies and frauds that range from rigging or surfing of ballot boxes, over bloating of the voting registers, special treatment to voters and fraudulent election officials, disappearance or destruction of ballot boxes, etc. Such irregularities and manipulations extenuates to serious political violence as the citizenry arise to express their grievances and protect their fundamental civic rights. The most pervasive of electoral violence are mostly carried out by youths who often times are sponsored by desperate aspirants jostling for various political positions.

The serious nature of the heinous irregularities exercised by politicians and their cohorts, including the connivance of some scrupulous electoral officials does not only undermine the confidence in the electoral processes in Nigeria, but depicts the nation as one of the most corrupt countries in the global scene.

Recommendation

In order to prevent electoral or political violence, it has been recommended that stakeholders such as the government, media, civil liberty societies and non-governmental agencies (NGOS), traditional rulers, opinion leaders and religious bodies should play vital roles in reforming the electoral processes in Nigeria.

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