

## Nigeria and the Challenges of Credible Political Leadership Since 1960

### LA NIGERIA ET LES DEFIS DE GOUVERNANCE POLITIQUE DEPUIS 1960

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#### Abstract

The Nigerian state celebrated its official fiftieth birthday on October 1, 2010. The drums were rolled out for the celebration, but we must pause to ask ourselves, what and why did Nigerian state celebrate? Is it in fulfillment of self rule which began in 1960 or jubilation in terms of national development? The paper is a discussion on the nature of Nigerian politics as it affects the emergence of credible political leadership in the post-colonial era. The paper argued that the dangerous and unproductive temperament of post-colonial Nigerian politics since 1960 has made it possible for weak and primitive accumulative class of leadership to impose itself on the Nigerian state for the past fifty years, thus leading to national underdevelopment in almost all facets. The recently conducted 2011 general elections in Nigeria, though adjudged as one of the best ever conducted in the country, also displayed some variables that have come to historically define electioneering in the country. The paper therefore concluded that for Nigerians to get it right and elect credible political leaders, the various institutions responsible for the sustenance of democracy such as the electoral body, judicial system and security forces should be empowered to perform their duties without any form of government interferences.

**Key words:** Governance; Politics; Leadership

#### Résumé

L'Etat Nigérien a célébré son cinquantième anniversaire

officiel sur Octobre 1, 2010. Les fûts ont été mis en œuvre pour la célébration, mais nous devons faire une pause à nous demander, qu'est-ce et pourquoi avez-nigériane Etat célébrer? Est-il dans l'accomplissement de l'autonomie qui a débuté en 1960 ou la jubilation en termes de développement national? Le papier est une discussion sur la nature de la politique nigérienne comme elle affecte l'émergence d'un leadership politique crédible dans l'ère post-coloniale. Le document fait valoir que le tempérament dangereux et improductif de la politique post-coloniale du Nigeria depuis 1960 a rendu possible pour la classe d'accumulation faible et primitif de leadership pour s'imposer à l'Etat nigérien pour les cinquante dernières années, conduisant ainsi à sous-développement nationaux dans presque tous les facettes. Le 2011 a récemment mené des élections générales au Nigeria, bien que jugé comme l'un des meilleurs jamais réalisé dans le pays, a également affiché des variables qui sont venus à définir historiquement électorale dans le pays. Le document a donc conclu que pour les Nigériens bien faire les choses et d'élire des dirigeants politiques crédibles, les différentes institutions responsables de la subsistance de la démocratie comme le corps électoral, le système judiciaire et les forces de sécurité devraient être habilités à exercer leurs fonctions sans aucune forme de gouvernement interférences.

**Mots clés:** Gouvernance; Politique; Dirigeants

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#### INTRODUCTION

Martin Meredith's *The State of Africa: A History of Fifty Years of Independence* chronicles the emotions

of a continent on the verge of greatness only to be truncated by corrupt, inept, unpatriotic, parasitic, egoist, myopic and morally depraved sets of post-colonial political leaders (Meredith, 2006). For Meredith, “the small educated elites that colonial rule produced in the 1920s and 1930s were preoccupied primarily with their own status, seeking to gain for themselves a role in administration...They paid little attention to the welfare of the rural masses” (Meredith, 2006:7). In the same vane, Nigeria, a country believe to be strategic in the overall goal in the development of Africa is still grabbing with the challenges of having a credible and patriotic political leaders to govern the country.

Though it is a sorry tale, political events between 1900 and 1959 were enough indicators that independent Nigeria would be confronted with difficult challenges, and top on the list of challenges would be a problem of patriotic and development oriented leadership at all levels of political structure. British colonial policies, the politics of 1914 amalgamation, promulgation of the 1922, 1946, 1951, 1954 constitutions, the emergence of ethnic biased politics from the 1940s, and the opposing and conflicting ideologies of early Nigerian politicians, all acted in concert to usher into independence a weak and mis-configured Nigerian state, with egoistic and ethnically minded political leadership as represented by the central and regional governments between 1960 and 1965 (Fayemiwa, 2001:45-46).

In any society, patriotic and charismatic leaders are usually unassuming, selfless, legitimate and service-oriented. They are personalities capable of effectively managing both human and material resources of the society. Unfortunately, since independence, Nigeria had been one of the richest exhibition theatres of political experiments in Africa being characterized by wide gab between theory and practice and between vision and reality. It is like the saying; “the more things change, the more they remain the same.”

1<sup>st</sup> October 2010 marked Nigerian’s fiftieth year of gaining political independence from Britain. Though we may agree that 1960 should be considered as the counting point, we should not forget Dudley’s observation that 1963 ought to be the counting point because, that was when Nigeria fully assumed the status of independence as a republic (Dudley, 1982: 42-43). However, a careful study of Nigerian politics between 1960 and 2011 would note some defining characteristics that have made it extremely difficult and challenging to produce credible leadership. Rather, production of weak and primitive accumulative class of leadership has been imposing itself on the Nigerian state, thus leading to national underdevelopment in almost all facets of the nation’s existence.

This perhaps made Ifidon to ponder if the ‘founding fathers’ of modern Nigeria ever thought of building a nation (Ifidon, 2003:168). Given the history of nationalist struggle in Nigeria, it could be said that the idea of

nationhood was expressed but later truncated by some of the factors we have discussed in the paper. However, the inability to build a virile nation since 1960 therefore prompted Achebe to conclude that “the trouble with Nigeria is simply and squarely a failure of leadership,” (Achebe, 1983:1), that has resulted to inept leadership and lack of “personal examples” which are Nigeria’s biggest problems (Achebe, 1983:1).

The paper therefore attempts to identify and examine some peculiar political characteristics in Nigerian politics, and to demonstrate that not until drastic political, attitudinal as well as constitutional restructuring occur, these identified indicators will continue to mar the process of true nation-building and form of politics that will produce committed and visionary leaders in Nigeria. The paper does not only raise these issues, but also proffers suggested policy options to recruitment of credible political leadership in Nigeria.

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## 1. PECULIAR CHARACTERISTICS OF NIGERIAN POLITICS

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It is germane to reiterate our concerns whether Nigerian political leaders really desire or have the political will to build a true nation, because some of the identified characteristics of Nigerian politics have become systemic and acceptable to the political class. Since 1960, political activities in Nigeria have witnessed the use of violence, militarization, monetization, god-fatherism, election rigging, thuggery, biased electoral culture, delayed judgments from election tribunals, ethnicity, selfishness, embezzlement of public funds, poverty (both of knowledge and materials), etc. These are some of the hydra headed obstacles that have prevented the emergence of patriotic and legitimate leadership in Nigeria. It is therefore important to examine some of these characteristics or factors which have become institutional blocs to having credible political leadership in Nigeria.

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## 2. CULTURE OF VIOLENCE

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The Nigerian political system is extremely volatile for contemplative minded individuals to partake in. The culture of violence, though present before 1960, became elevated to the level of national status as one of the quickest means to attain and sustains political power. This culture can be argued to have reached its peak in the then western region of Nigeria. The accusation and counter-accusation between Akintola and Awolowo supporters after the October, 1965 election into the Western House of Assembly degenerated into conflict, arson, and murder in the philosophy of the infamous *operation* (wet with petrol and set ablaze), before violence became fully nationalized with the January 15, 1966 military coup against the leadership of the first republic. The weak

political leadership in the centre and regions were unable to control the slow-balling effects occasioned by the outcome of the national census results of 1963, disputed federal election of 1964, and the controversial western election of 1965 all provided the impetus for the military to violently overthrow the government. The military coup plotters justified their action on the ground that the national leadership had lost contact with the aspiration of the people (Ademoyega, 1981:21). The ouster of the Balewa regime brought in General J.T.U. Aguiyi – Ironsi as the first military Head of state in Nigeria.

The success of the use of violence from this period became the real prototype for subsequent methods of recruitment of Nigerian political leaders. The manner the coup was executed and the emergence of Ironsi as the head of government gave the impression to some parts of Nigeria that the coup was ethnically orchestrated. Therefore, violence was again adopted in July 1966 to topple the Ironsi regime and that brought Lt. Col. Yakubu Gowon as the new Head of State. The inability of the Gowon and Ojukwu groups to reach a compromise on how best to provide leadership for Nigeria provoked a three-year civil war (1967 – 1970), and the consequent result was the prolonged stay of the military in national government with Gowon as Head.

It is reported that the Gowon regime was overthrown in a bloodless counter-coup, but the attempt to unseat the new leader, General Murtala Mohammed was violently executed on February 15, 1976. The emergence of civil rule in 1979 did not stop the spate of violence in Nigerian politics, as there were myriad cases of violence among supporters of the five political parties that participated in the elections. The overthrow of the civilian regime in 1983 saw the military back again to national politics till 1999. Between 1999 and 2011, the use of violence to effect change of leadership has become one of the defining factors that have characterized the body polity. For example, the 2007 general election was widely reported to be violent. Most of the states in Nigeria experienced various shades of violence during the elections as observed in Osun, Edo, Kano, Ondo, (Uchechukwu, et al 2007: 40 and 44), Oyo, Lagos, Nasarawa, (Ajayi, 2007: 5-6), Rivers, Delta, Kogi, Anambra, Ogun, Niger, Benue, (Sunday Punch 2007: 2 and 4), Bayelsa, Akwa Ibom, Cross Rivers, Katsina, Zamfara, Sokoto, Kaduna, and Jos (Olaniyi, 2007: 13, 14 and 15) just to mention but a few.

In spite of the reports of the violent elections, the then President of Nigeria, Olusegun Obasanjo, under whose regime the elections were conducted, was widely reported to have expressed satisfaction with the conduct of the elections. In the words of Obasanjo “very early this morning, I tried to get round the country, to find out what the situation is.... the general situation in the country is very satisfactory” (Oyebode, 2007:10). Obasanjo’s comments and disposition should be understood as an endorsement of the acceptability and tradition of violence

in Nigerian politics.

Prior to the 2011 general elections, the spate of politically motivated violence under the camouflage of religion was alarming as witnessed in bomb blast in some parts of Nigeria such as Abuja, Maiduguri, Jos, Adamawa and Asaba in the last quarter of 2010 are confirmation of how violent Nigerian politics has become. Commenting on the spate of bombing in Nigeria, the Sultan of Sokoto, Alhaji Muhammadu Sa’ad who is the head of all Moslems in Nigeria and co-chair of the Nigerian Inter-Religious Council (NIREC) maintained that the “failure of leadership” in the country made it possible for disgruntled elements to score “political issue with religious colouration.... If you look deep down, many crises have political connotation, some of the problem had been there for so long a time and people forget” (Ajayi, 2010: 6).

Nigerian political leaders fail to understand that violence provoked by conflict often turns people’s attention from creative production to creative destruction. The 2011 recently conducted general elections in Nigeria had its own share of violence with the use of sophisticated bombs to attack government institutions connected with the conduct of the election. The Independent National Electoral Commission’s (INEC) office in Sulajah, Niger state was attacked with bombs that led to the death of thirteen Nigerians including INEC staff. The post election violence that erupted especially after the presidential polls no doubts calls for urgent steps to prevent reoccurrence. States such as Bauchi, Kaduna, Adamawa, Kano, Niger, Gombe and Imo experienced high levels of violence, but notable of these was that of Bauchi that claimed the lives of ten NYSC ad-hoc staff of INEC among others.

### 3. MILITARIZATION OF POLITICS

The massive deployment of violence in Nigerian politics is due to the militarization of politics in the country as entrenched by the Nigeria army. Of the fifty years of Nigerian’s independence, thirty of the years were under military regime, while the remaining twenty years of civil rule can still be regarded at best, shadows of the military era. The long stay of the military in Nigerian political governance introduced some elements that have come to militarize Nigerian politics. Some of these elements are the use of force, arms, display of attitude of breach of the law, less commitment to accountability to the people, gross abuse of human rights, disregard for the sanctity of the regular court system as the military adopted the use of tribunals and panels for adjudication, suspension of the nation’s constitution, and the introduction of decrees to govern the people, and other uncivilized practices detrimental to the general wellbeing of the citizens (Ehiabhi, 1999).

As the military disengaged from active politics, most of its personnel flooded political parties that took over the reign of political leadership. This meant a continuation



of military attitudes under civil rule, and it should be mentioned that ushering in civilian regimes in Nigeria (1979 – 1983, 1999 – 2007) were orchestrated by the military and since 1999, retired military officers have dominated the Nigerian political space.

From the aforementioned points, it would be difficult for civil, law abiding, and un-militarized minded individuals to survive in Nigerian politics. It is this militarized situation that has made it possible for those who are not fit for governance to be in control of state power, because, they possess the capacity to deploy apparatus of force to actualize their political ambition. The massive verbal attack on Babangida by Nigerians from all walks of life when he declared his intention to contest in 2011 Nigeria presidential election is a signal to show Nigerians disgust and gross apathy towards those associated with the military (Oni, 2010:7).

#### 4. GOD-FATHERISM AND ELECTION RIGGING

God-fatherism in politics is a global phenomenon, but in the Nigerian contest, it refers to an individual or group of persons capable of sponsoring and making sure those sponsored satisfy their desired political intentions which are or in most cases inimical to national development. In any respect, god-fatherism is actually mentorism in the likes of the philosophy of leaders such as Awolowo, Ahmadu Bello, and Azikwe who were god-fathers in their own glorious days. But the emergence of democratic practice in Nigeria between 1979 and 1983, and since 1999 has brought into lime light the havoc some of these so called political god-fathers have wrecked on the body polity of the state.

From the north to the south, east to west of Nigeria, some persons have constituted themselves into a cabal that determines the tempo of political decisions in their regions. These god-fathers are able to achieve their aims because they have access to state machinery, and can deploy unquestionable amount of violence. These god-fathers have perfected the act of election rigging by using thugs to steal and snatch ballot boxes, multiple voting by single individual, and compromising officers of the electoral bodies to rig election results in favour of their sponsored candidates. The 2011 elections witnessed 117 reported cases of ballot box snatching in most states especially in Delta state that recorded the highest cases (Ehiabhi, 2011).

The instances of imposition of wrong and illegitimate leaders on the people do not end with party politics as there have been reported cases of the executive arms of government imposing traditional rulers of their choice on the people against the law of the land. This unethical act is usually carried out either by monetization or obnoxious agreement that the latter should support the

former in election rigging. Unfortunately, this practice has rubbished and affronted the once cherished traditional political institution in Nigeria. The grave implication for development is that, whoever desires to contest for political offices should be ready to compromise standard and morals in order to win elections. Therefore, it will be difficult to have the emergence of patriotic leadership at all levels.

#### 5. COMPROMISED ELECTORAL BODY

Agencies responsible for organizing the conduct of elections in Nigeria have not faithfully discharged their duties because of two fundamental factors. One, these agencies were set up by the wrong institutions, in this case the military, and two, members of these electoral bodies are appointed to implement the whimsies and caprices of the appointing power and god-fathers. The Federal Electoral Commission (FEDECO) inaugurated by the Obasanjo military regime to conduct the 1979 state and federal elections was accused by other political parties of collaborating with the government to manipulate electoral results in favour of National Party of Nigeria (NPN). The transformations of FEDECO to National Electoral Commission, NEC by the Babangida regime did not change the operational structure of conducting fraudulent elections. NEC organized the election that produced civilian governors without any hope of a civilian presidential election in 1993; this was after so many times of changing the time table of election by the Babangida regime.

The stepping aside of Babangida regime and the coming into political power of General Sanni Abacha after three months of Interim National Government (ING) brought about a change again from NEC to Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC). The new electoral body was responsible for conducting the 1999, 2003 and the 2007 state and federal elections. The torment of attack on INEC as provoked by the shoddy conduct of elections, especially after the 2007 state and federal elections from all sections of the country re-emphasized the challenges posed to organizing credible election in Nigeria. INEC was accused by other political parties of grossly abusing its mandate by aiding the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) to rig election (Newswatch, 1999: 13). The consequences of the 2007 election led to massive post-election protests as witnessed with the number of petitions before the electoral tribunals in all the states of the federation.

The appointment of Professor Attahiru Jega in the last quarter of 2010 as the new INEC Chairman was hailed by many Nigerians as a right step to the conduct of a credible election in 2011. The confidence of Nigerians was boosted by the fact that Professor Jega displayed boldness, frankness, patriotism and eschew all forms of ethnic biases when he headed the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) during the era of military

dictatorship in Nigeria. However, it should be stated that Jega's pedigree as a unionist was not enough to conduct a highly anticipated credible election in 2011 because there was no institutional reforms, especially in the areas of security of INEC staff, electoral materials and voters.

The fear of skeptics on the ability of INEC to conduct a credible election in 2011 was heightened in December 2010 when some Direct Data Capture (DDC) machines were stolen at the airport on their arrival in to the Country. The DDC machine is the electronic device INEC used in its registration of eligible voters for the 2011 general elections. However, it should be stated that in spite of all challenges in conducting elections in Nigeria, INEC should be commended for organizing the 2011 elections that has produced more of the peoples' political than god-father manipulative leaders.

## 6. ELECTION TRIBUNALS AND DELAY OF JUDGMENT

The establishment of election tribunals is primarily to address issues in the election process. But developments in Nigeria, especially with the outcome of the 2007 election, have shown that these tribunals have been very slow in addressing petitions before them (Ndujihe, 2007:8). The delay in responding to election petitions have rubbed those who were properly voted for to represent their people's interest, thereby denying their constituencies expected legitimate leadership (Akpan, 2007:8). It is unimaginable, but true that at the close of the tenure of public officers elected in 2007, some petitioned cases had not received judgment. Those who had judgment perhaps came too late as observed in states like Ondo, Edo, Delta, Ekiti and Osun. In fact the cases of Ekiti and Osun are pathetic because judgments were delivered in 2010 in favour of those who won their states gubernatorial election after 3 years (2007). The nature of slow process and delay in judicial execution and pronouncement has robbed reliable and indeed people oriented candidates from of those who voted for them. The consequent result is imposition of rift-rafts and production of wrong and bad leadership for the country.

## 7. A CRITIQUE OF SUGGESTED METHODS OF LEADERSHIP RECRUITMENT IN NIGERIA

There are various opinions on how best to improve the quality of Nigerian leadership. Some of these suggestions failed to take into consideration, the impact of the characteristics of Nigerian politics as they determine the quality of those that emerge as elected public officers. But in this paper, we shall limit ourselves to some of those opinions that have dominated political discourse in

Nigeria since the 2007 general elections because these opinions actually influenced political actions in the 2011 elections. Some of these opinions have to do with zoning, electoral reforms, government of national unity and a call for a bloody revolution.

## 8. ZONING AS AN OPTION

The debate about zoning simply means political contest to public offices should be decided on ethnic and geo-political considerations. This is capable of further polarizing the fragile Nigerian state. The debate turned in to a divide between the northern and southern parts of the country as the northern half insisted that the region should produce the next Nigerian President in 2011. Though this practice is unconstitutional, it has been an unwritten norm among Nigerian politicians (Aturu, 2007:98). That the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP, the ruling party in Nigeria) heated the body polity of the nation on the issue of zoning is a manifestation of the existence of a one party system in Nigeria, otherwise why should the internal workings of a political party on the rationale of selecting its candidate be of concern to majority of Nigerians if there was a strong opposition party. The fact still remains that there is no political party yet in Nigeria that can serve as a veritable opposition to any government in power and that most likely made the PDP to win the presidency and more seats in the national parliament in the 2011 elections. Nigeria has over 250 ethnic nationalities within its geographical space so; to adopt the policy of zoning may derail the urgent need to build national consciousness among the ethnic groups.

Sule Lemido, the immediate past governor of Jigawa state of Nigeria, in support of zoning said "in deeply divided multi-ethnic societies like Nigeria, democracy cannot be based solely on a free-wheeling majoritarianism. Hence the transformation of the principle of zoning from a conservative,... to... a nationally settled conflict management therapy for Nigerian's diversity." (Ologun, 2010:7). Zoning is also regarded in Ibrahim Babangida's words, "part of democracy and leadership recruitment" (The Nation, 2010:57).

The questions that come to mind in relation to addressing the characteristics of Nigerian politics are, how has the practice of zoning reduced violence and other electoral vices, and what is its contributions to provision of quality leadership? Therefore, zoning in reality, is about deciding the group to plunder the national treasury in respective of the process of electing such group (s).

## 9. GOVERNMENT OF NATIONAL UNITY

The proposition for a Government of National Unity (GNU) was first initiated back in 1964 when Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe advised Sir. Abubakar Balewa to form a national government to forester national unity. What is then the

understanding of a unity government? Nigerian politicians have a conception of government of national unity but lack agreement on its composition. According to Mohammed, GNU is a government that has in its cabinet, "University teachers, labour, journalist, doctors, etc from across the country.... and not a preponderance of people from the ruling party and one or two from one opposition party" (Ikuomola, 2010:3).

Chief Ralph Nwosu, disagreed with Mohammed's opinion. For Nwosu, any GNU should be considered as a "product of illegality... to... buy legitimacy which could not be obtained from a due electoral process" (Abuh, 2007:8). Therefore, for GNU to be legitimate, it must include political stake holders such as political parties and their chairmen and parties' presidential candidates (Famaro, 2007:6). However, Munir Yakubu views GNU as creating the atmosphere to breed a one-party state and thereby stifle quality opposition (Ibid). From the foregoing, GNU is an appeasement policy to placate strong opposition without addressing the circumstances that created the need for it. However, the tone of the current ruling party in Nigeria (PDP) is seeking the inclusion of other parties in the governance of the country to form a GNU.

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## 10. VIOLENT REVOLUTION

This was the understanding of those who executed the first military coup in Nigeria, that only a violent revolution was required to re-direct political machinery (The Guardian, 2007:9). This same desire was re-iterated recently by Prof. Ben Nwanbueze (SAN), a member of the defunct Nigerian Presidential Advisory Council set up by President Goodluck Jonathan. In his words, "I want a wholesome transformation,... I want a bloody revolution. We need a revolutionary change, a bloody one and those who survive will pick up the pieces... I cannot see the country being saved other than through a bloody revolution" (Oyebade, 2010:3). Nwanbueze reached that conclusion based on his close observation of the high level of corruption among political public officers in Nigeria (Oyebade, 2010:3).

Though Lt. Gen., T.Y. Danjuma, a fellow member of the Presidential Advisory Council agreed with Nwanbueze that Nigeria needed a fundamental transformation, he disagreed with his methodology. His grounds of disagreement is that a violent revolution, though enterprising, may be difficult to control once it starts because, it can even consume those who are supposed to dictate its course, therefore leaving it in the hands of opportunist with no idea of how the revolution was conceived. Danjuma therefore, advocated that a patriotic and focused political leadership can bring about the desired effect of a revolution. He avers that "one man in position of authority can transform our country. Only we have not been lucky to have such a man" (Oyebade, 2010:3).

We agree with Nwanbueze, that revolution can help transform societies just as it occurred in America in 1776, France in 1789, and Russia in 1917. We also share Danjuma's wisdom that a revolution, if not properly guided can degenerate to wanton destruction of valuable lives and properties as experienced in the famous 'Reign of Terror' in French revolutionary years. But the unanswered question is still, who will stage the revolution (if at all it is necessary), or how will the right man in authority emerge to transform Nigeria?

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## 11. ELECTORAL REFORMS

The persistent calls for electoral reforms in Nigeria reached its crescendo after the infamous 2007 general elections. The shoddy circumstances of the elections as recognized by the late President Musa Yar'adua necessitated the inauguration of the Electoral Reform Committee on 28th of August 2007 under the headship of retired Justice Muhammadu Uwais. The recommendations of the committee addressed some of the obstacles facing the emergence of credible leadership as bad culture of Nigerian politics. On the manner of minimizing and perhaps eliminating the use of violence, militarization, god-fatherism and election rigging, it is recommended that an independent Electoral Offences Commission be established to deal with electoral offences.

It was also recommended that more Electoral Tribunals be inaugurated in states by reducing the number of Judges in each tribunal from five to three, so that petitions can be dealt with within six months (Electoral Reform. n d).

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## 12. POLICY OPTIONS AND CONCLUSION

Leadership in a democracy is service oriented for societal development. If that is the case, how can a dependable and credible leadership emerge in any society? In the Nigeria situation for the past fifty years, the challenge of good leadership has been difficult to overcome because of the special character of Nigerian party politics. Until Nigerians effectively address the presence of violence, militarization, god-fatherism, election rigging, slow judicial process, and biased electoral body in Nigerian politics, the problem of having credible political leadership will persist.

However, the recommendations of the Electoral Reform Committee, if faithfully implemented, would go a long way in minimizing the employment of these identified characteristics in Nigerian politics. The holistic effects of the recommendations would rob on the quality of personalities that would make themselves available to be entrusted with leadership role. For example, the recommendation of the establishment of Political Parties Registration and Regulatory Commission to serve among others, to register political parties should be implemented. The Commission should put a ceiling and downward



review of the amount parties charge on candidates vying for public elective positions, as this would reduce monetization of election and enable persons of sound mind with average wealth to contest elections. Also, reduction in the salary and allowances of public political office holders would equally reduce the mentality of do or die philosophy in Nigerian politics.

Be that as it may, there are some grey areas in the recommendations that should be properly articulated to enhance the functionality of transforming Nigeria. We therefore propose that the recommendation dealing with Public Funding of Political Parties be amended in such a way that government should not fund political parties. As at present, there are about 61 registered political parties in Nigeria with just only 5 of them showing political relevance such as the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN), All Nigerian Peoples Party (ANPP), All Peoples Grand Alliance (APGA) and Labour Party (LP). This would reduce the emergence of pseudo parties that are only interested in receiving funds from government without any electoral value.

Moreover, proper screening of candidates vying for public offices should be given priority attention. This should involve sifting their history in order to ensure recruitment of credible candidates. Also, functional cultural and political education should be given to the masses. It is equally recommended that harsh punishment such as imprisonment should be imposed on those who manipulate votes including those who have illegally enjoyed some time in the office and later ejected by the court of law. Such cheats should be made to refund the total salaries and emolument received, this would surely teach the political criminals and dupes some lessons.

The international community in the western hemisphere especially the US should be more concerned on how democratic values are expressed anywhere in the world because the US is the biggest working democracy in the international system. If the US does not increase its engagement in Africa, successive generational African leaders may never truly appreciate the beauty of democracy and its associated rights because they are being groomed in an environment that is 'quasi democratic.' Nigeria is believed to be strategic in the maintenance of peace and stability in Africa, America and other western democracies should overtly expressed concern and commitment to the search for credible political leadership that can partner with the international community. It is however instructive to avers that the return to civil rule in Nigeria should not be equated with the practice of democracy because the conduct of the 1999, 2007 and 2011 general elections in the country reflects a country unwilling to tow the part of civilized democracies.

Nigeria is divided into 6 geo-political zones of the South South, South West, South East, North West, North Central and North East and if elections are conducted in these zones on different dates in the country, it would

enable INEC and other state agencies associated with the conduct of elections to be effectively mobilized. This suggestion is hinged on the accidental but lessons inspiring experiences in Nigeria during the 2011 elections. One of the factors that led to the marginal success of INEC performances in the 2011 election was the conduct of elections in some part of Nigeria on separate dates different from the original INEC time table. For example gubernatorial and national assembly elections were conducted in Ekiti state on the 16th of April, Kaduna and Bauchi States had their gubernatorial election on the 28th of April, while Imo State had it on the 5th of May all in 2011.

It is fervently hoped that if these recommendations are well received, the lessons derived would assist INEC in preparation for subsequent elections as this would further enhance good and productive governance with credible and service-oriented political leadership in Nigeria.

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